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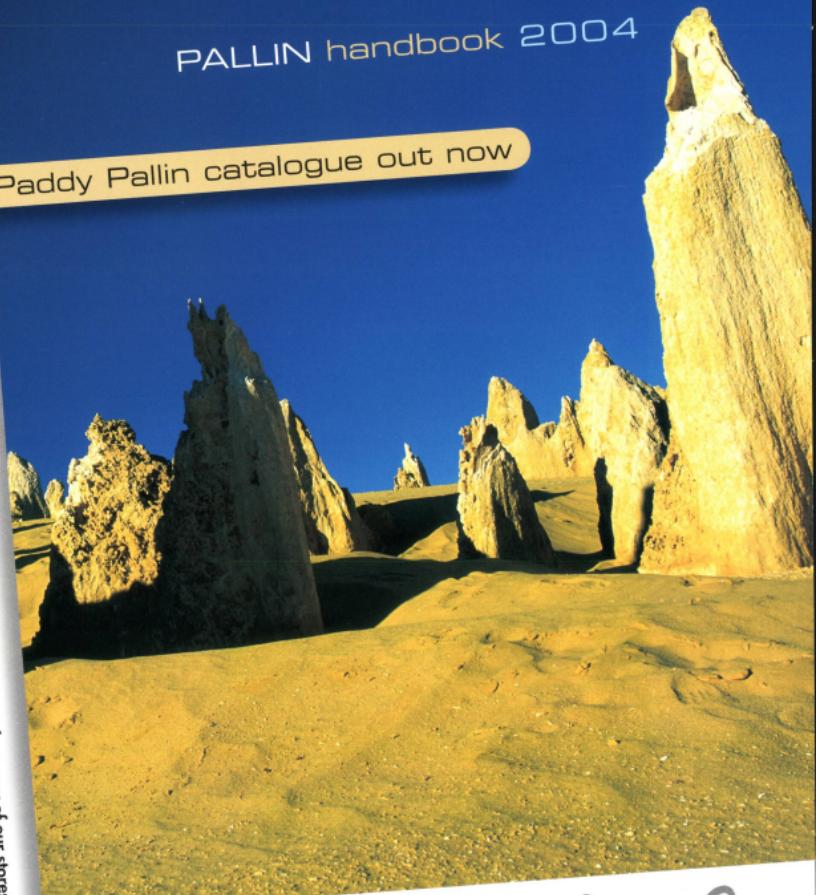
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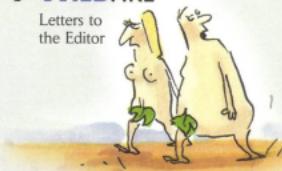
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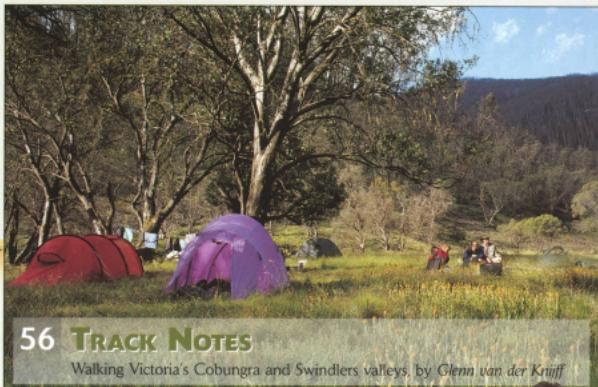
Tasmania's threatened old-growth forests



Spring (Oct-Dec) 2004, issue 94 \$7.99*

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Cover Sue Baxter above the postcard-perfect village of La Villa during a traverse of Italy's Dolomites. See the article starting on page 22. Chris Baxter



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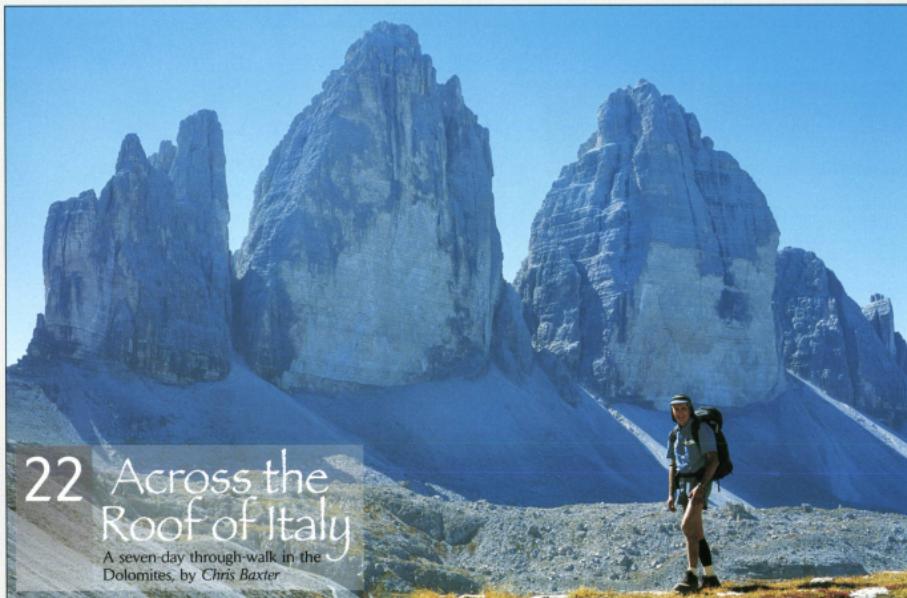
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Established 1981

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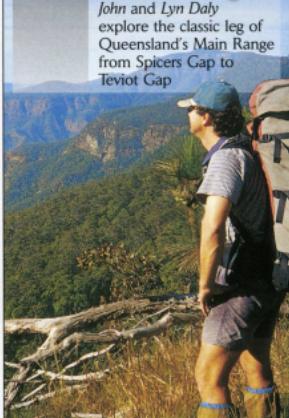
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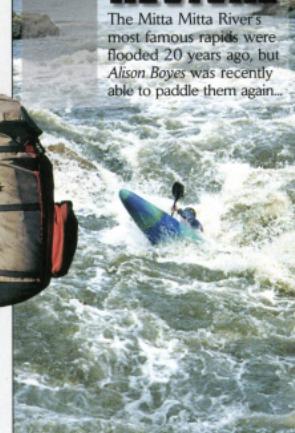
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POWER TO THE PEOPLE

From ground swell to tidal wave

'It's not about us, it's about me. What am I going to do? We are *all* empowered.'

Fabian Dattner addressing The Wilderness Society's rally against wood-chipping, Melbourne, 6 June 2004

THERE ARE NOT MANY EXAMPLES OF 'ORDINARY AUSTRALIANS' taking to the streets *en masse* to force recalcitrant governments to abandon long-held policies that have ceased to be tenable. The Vietnam War and the proposal to flood the Franklin River come to mind as two such policies swept away in tidal waves of expression that 'enough was enough'. An earlier example is denying women the right to vote. Such change doesn't come overnight; it takes time and education to shift public opinion from widespread acceptance to almost universal rejection, for enlightenment to run its course.

The unenlightened practice of decimating Australia's—particularly Tasmania's—native forests for wood-chips is shaping up to be the 'next Franklin', to be once and for all rejected out of hand by a vast and varied array of 'ordinary Australians' as being no longer tolerable, let alone necessary.

Reports in Green Pages in this and the previous issue of *Wild* tell of the extraordinary series of public rallies held in mainland Australian capital cities for the World Environment Day weekend, 4–6 June, and earlier in the year in Tasmania. That in Melbourne alone attracted 15 000 participants who called for an end to the logging of Tasmania's old-growth forests. I am proud to have been one of them. I found the experience informative and uplifting. But more than that, I was profoundly moved by the prevailing sense of optimism that after years of 'crying in the wilderness' we finally stand on the cusp of a breakthrough—from ignorant, short-sighted and selfish destruction to something more enlightened, forward-looking and in the public interest. I was struck by the sense of inevitability that pervaded the day's activities. I was also struck by the enormous diversity of those in the throng: the young; the old; male; female; black and white... Nowhere was this diversity more evident than among those addressing the crowd: businesswoman and entrepreneur Fabian Dattner, Aboriginal spokesman Kutcha Edwards, television gardening personality Peter Cundell, rock musician Paul Kelly, celebrated novelist Richard Flanagan and environmental activist Virginia Young. I was impressed by their understanding of the issue, their commitment and, above all, their *passion*. They spoke with authority, convinced that now this senseless destruction is finally to end. No one showed greater passion and conviction than 78-year-old Cundell.

A large-screen, silent, TWS video spoke with galvanising eloquence. Aerial shots of the remaining native forests contrasted with 'scorched earth' scenes reminiscent of war—helicopters fire-bombing razed logging coupes, and rows of the corpses of native animals poisoned by loggers seeking to protect plantation seedlings from their grazing. The poison used, 1080, results in the unfortunate animals suffering a drawn-out and painful death. Par-

the matter now has to be taken from its hands. It is necessary to force federal politicians to act. And with a federal election—and what could be a close one at that—now imminent, the major parties may be inclined to overcome their notorious reluctance to act, and listen to what is clearly a widely held wish by the electorate that the trashing of Tasmanian old-growth forests be ended. This is particularly so as the Greens are now

**we finally stand on the
cusp of a breakthrough...
Every individual has a role to
play in changing history**



Chris above Ketchem Bay, South-west Cape, Tasmania, in April.
Baxter collection

ticularly shocking were scenes of animals writhing in agony and of a live infant wallaby being removed from its dead mother's pouch. SeaChange's Fiona Corke informed us that the use of 1080 is banned in many parts of the world and that its effects on water-supplies and on the food-chain are not yet known, let alone understood.

However, so far it's not a 'done deal'. Indeed, as I indicated in the Editorial last issue, the Tasmanian Government—its actions consistent with a depressingly long list of precedents established by previous governments in that State—is implacably opposed to common sense and the common good in this particular form. As with the Franklin,

a political force of more than mere 'nuisance value' and are gaining ground markedly.

Every concerned voter must take personal responsibility for achieving the desired outcome through passionate involvement and *action*. Every individual has a role to play in changing history in this way. We can donate money or effort to TWS and lobby politicians. If nothing else, we must ensure that we use our vote wisely. I don't think it's too much to ask of ourselves, particularly when we consider the alternative—a 'take no prisoners' end-game of felling, fire-bombing and poisoning Tasmania's unique natural wildlife. ☩

Chris Baxter
editorial@wild.com.au

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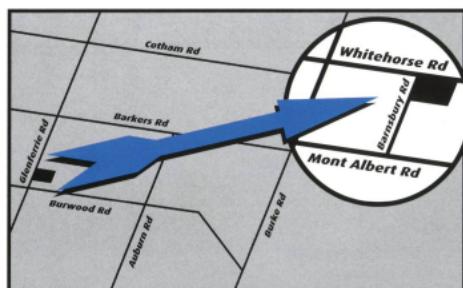
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A crock of excrement

Don't be pushed around by glorified gardeners

I READ WITH GROWING CONTEMPT THE LETTER written by Rupert Russell—a National Park Ranger—(Wildfire, *Wild* no 93) referring to Steven Nowakowski's Track Notes for Thornton Peak.

My contempt stems from the very typical attitude of our National Park custodians here in the north; the attitude that National Parks are 'off limits' and are not allowed to be accessed by the general public. What a crock of excrement!

I appreciate that Rupert is trying to do his best to protect the parks and do his duty to his government, and I agree that there probably has been damage done and litter left behind—and it's great that he can clean it up! After all, what are our tax dollars paying for? I also know that Rupert's workload and insufficient funding probably don't allow him the time or the luxury of more policing and/or education of the general public.

Unfortunately, it is the mind set of 'Well, we'll just discourage visitors to these areas' that is so very disturbing. National Parks are for everybody to enjoy! And try as they might, the National Parks Service has no grounds to prevent anybody from entering and just being in a National Park. Of course they have powers to prevent certain activities such as hunting, shooting and motorcycle riding.

The National Parks Service seriously needs to revisit its stance on access, and rangers need to get off their pseudo power trips and realise that not everybody—in fact a very small percentage of people—is a tree-cutting, fire-lighting, small-animal killing, littering menace to the environment.

Australia's far north has some magnificent National Parks and walks and I applaud Steven for sharing them with the rest of Australia, and I encourage other keen environmentally-minded outdoor enthusiasts to do the same and not to be pushed around by glorified gardeners.

Here's a concept, Rupert: maybe if more people come to these areas and appreciate them, their very presence will discourage the mess makers and vandals.

To coin a phrase, the outdoors needs rangers like a dog needs fleas, mate.

Jay Reilly
Cairns, Qld

Crying by the side of the track

It's unsettling, if at times amusing, to watch hordes of unsuspecting peak baggers setting off from Farmhouse Creek each year into the heart of the wilderness. The apparent 'short cut' to Federation Peak is a gruelling three- to five-day work-out, by way of the in-

famous Moss Ridge. Originally a locals' route, this over-publicised, overused track is not maintained by Parks & Wildlife and becomes a muddy, scrubby nightmare for many walkers. Others find the thick forest's twisted roots, fallen trees and notorious horizontal scrub or the extremely steep Moss Ridge too great a physical challenge. Throw in a little rain, snow and gale-force wind and things can get a little scary! A good percentage of walkers never make it to Moss Ridge. Many reach Federation Peak but find themselves thoroughly exhausted when the difficult climax requires their full concentration and strength. There are infrequent views along the way and much of the track is often seriously affected by heavy rain and flooding.

I regularly come across groups and individuals on the Farmhouse Creek track on their way to, or back from, disaster. They are often seasoned walkers with their eyes on 'the prize'. Usually, they're out of practice and unprepared. I have been forced to play the role of first-aid officer, food provider, grief counsellor, weather forecaster and devil's advocate.

I've found a Victorian bushwalker crying by the side of the track, unable to continue to his planned camp-site. I met a large group of West Australians last summer on their long-anticipated quest for the Holy Grail. After struggling for a day through the relatively easy first five kilometres to the Mt Picton saddle, they turned back—tail, and handy-cam, between their muddy legs. And then there was the New Zealand foursome who severely underestimated the Tasmanian terrain. Wet, sick, depressed and beaten, the experienced climbers crawled back down Moss Ridge, Fedder unclaimed, swearing never to return to Tasmanian shores... Walkers out of their element. They risk their own, and others', safety. They cost emergency services time and money with invariable rescue operations. And, sad to say, they unnecessarily degrade the area.

There's no point blaming Parks & Wildlife for poor track conditions. Funding for track maintenance in Tasmania's World Heritage Areas has all but dried up. Multimillion dollar tourist projects and old-growth logging continue to threaten wilderness boundaries... Apart from lobbying government and protesting the destruction of our wilderness, we have no option but to accept the responsibility as our own.

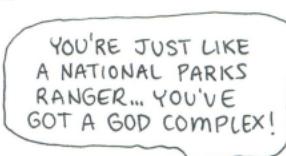
The Eastern Arthurs approach to Federation is the preferred route with a maximum party size of four people or two tents. Public transport is available to and from Scotts Peak. The unfairly maligned Huon ('Yo-Yo') Track follows the Huon River on a more hardened surface, allowing good access to the Eastern Arthurs. While not well maintained, it requires none of the gymnastic skills that the Farmhouse Creek track demands, and has far less mud and scrub. It should be noted, though, that it is also an arduous journey as the nickname implies...

Simon McLaughlin
Kaoota, Tas

Boy's Own

A most inspiring article from Quentin Chester (*The Wild Life*, *Wild* no 92), giving me lots of names to add to my ever-growing list of authors to read.

Some additions to the list of Australian bush authors: Ian Idress; although his writing style can sometimes be like *Boy's Own* and primitive, he does give a great sense of place, especially the Kimberley area. Xavier Herbert: *Capricornia* and *Poor Fellow My Country* give a powerful feel for the struggle of Whites in 'taming' the Northern Territory,



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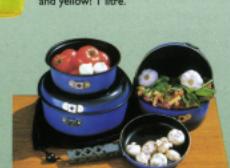
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contrasting it with the Aborigines' bond with their country. And another US author: David Quammen...

Keep them coming. Quentin. I really enjoy your articles and love reading books about habitats. Thoreau's *Walden* has to be the benchmark for the superbly written book recording the feel and minutiae about the cycle of the seasons.

Jim Happ
Ringwood, Vic

Hydatids and mange

There are many good ecological reasons to prohibit people walking their dogs in National Parks.

The main aim of National Parks and nature reserves is to protect native ecosystems and the wildlife that depend upon them. They also provide a place for visitor opportunities that are compatible with this aim. Dogs in National Parks distress, injure and kill wildlife. This is not compatible with nature conservation.

Slow-moving, large skinks like shinglebacks or eastern blue-tongued lizards are easy prey for a dog going on a walk with its owner.

Ground-nesting- or ground-feeding birds are easily disturbed by the activities of a dog. These include threatened species such as the speckled warbler and diamond firetail.

A dog's presence can cause considerable distress to potential prey such as bandicoots, wallabies and kangaroos. A number of small-to medium-sized animals will avoid areas where dogs have been active.

There is also potential for dogs to pass diseases to wildlife such as hydatids and mange. Dogs defecating on tracks are also offensive to many bushwalkers.

Steve Taylor
Deakin, ACT

More balanced

I read with interest the continuing debate about the use of and potential damage caused by trekking poles. I also note the gear survey in *Wild* (no 93) by Tristan Campbell. I find it hard to see how he can justify that trekking poles are 'beneficial for the environment'-a fairly simplistic and superficial comment. A more balanced assessment would have included arguments for and against the use of trekking poles and suggestions as to how to minimise impact of using trekking poles. Tristan has obviously not walked in the same places I have where the impact of trekking poles is substantial. For your information I include the *Appalachian Register* as an attachment which gives a much more balanced and researched overview of trekking poles and their impact on the environment.

Jeff Moran
Shepparton, Vic

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au

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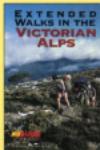
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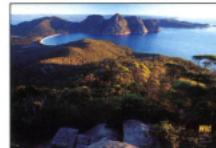
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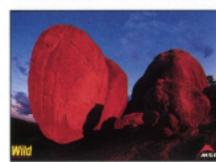
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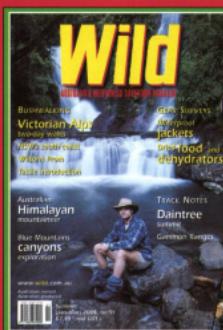
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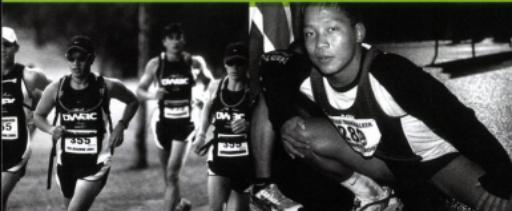
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OVERLAND TRACK OVERHAUL

Grant Dixon outlines the changes

Tasmania's 65 kilometre Overland Track is arguably Australia's premier long-distance walking track. About 9000 walkers now traverse it annually and there have been concerns about environmental degradation and overcrowding for some time. The track's infrastructure—including seven huts, toilets at major overnight stops, hardened camp-sites, extensive track surfacing and hardening—is also under pressure. In response, the Parks & Wildlife Service will introduce a booking system from the 2005–2006 season. Details of the

system have yet to be determined but the following is an outline:

- The booking system will manage departures during the peak walking season (late spring to mid-autumn) and will apply from Waterfall Valley in the north to Windy Ridge in the south. Pine Valley, Scott Kilvert, Narcissus and Echo Point Huts will not be included at this stage.
- During peak season, all walkers will be required to walk north to south and move on each day. Side-trips will still be allowed

as long as a different overnight site is reached. During the off-season walkers will be free to do as they please.

- A specific Overland Track fee will be introduced in late 2005. This will apply year-round to all walkers, whether staying in huts or not. The fee aims to reflect the cost of maintaining the track, toilets and other infrastructure, not just the huts.

For more details and updates, check the Web site www.overlandtrack.com.au

Rogaining round-up

Australian success at the World Rogaining Championships, by Claire Rogers

The White Mountains of Arizona, USA, site of the sixth World Rogaining Championship in early May, held some familiar challenges for Australian rogainers and a few surprises. Thirty Australians competed on 18 of the 175 teams and placed very competitively in the face of unfamiliar terrain and conditions.

In a surprise twist, overall winners Mike Kloster and Michael Tobin were not experienced rogainers but adventure racers out to improve their navigation skills. Australians figured prominently in the results with David Rowlands and New Zealand teammate Greg Barbour coming second overall and placing first in the Men's Veterans. Australians dominated this category—Derek Morris and Ted van Geldermalsen came second and Rod Gray and Geoff Lawford took third place. David Baldwin and Julie Quinn took first place in the mixed division. The US/Australia team of Sharon Crawford and Robin Spriggs placed first in the Women's Super Vet category.

In another odd twist of fate, Australian Nigel Aylott and US teammate Michael Springer came in an hour late after miscalculating the return time to the finish.

Australian Rogaining Championships, by Rob Tucker

This event was held on 3–4 July in the magnificent Flinders Ranges, 400 kilometres north of Adelaide. One hundred and fifty teams competed including four from New Zealand and one from the USA.

The course was designed to be navigationally testing, requiring participants to cover about 100 kilometres in 24 hours to clean up. This lured at least six teams into planning to collect all controls. Only two teams achieved this: the Australian Capital Territory team of David Baldwin,

Adrian Sheppard and Trevor Jacobs finished first overall, with 32 minutes and 32 seconds to spare, while overall second place, and first place for a mixed team went to Tom Landon-Smith and Alina McMasters, also from the ACT, with 5 minutes and 13 seconds remaining. Winners in other categories were: female: Julie Quinn and Emma Murray (ACT; fifth overall); male veterans: David Rowlands and Mike Hotchkiss (NSW; third overall), mixed: Richard Robinson (Queensland) and Vivienne Price (Tasmania) (eighth overall).



Australian Rogaining Championship winners, David Baldwin, Adrian Sheppard and Trevor Jacobs with their loot. Detlef Ringewalt

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September

| | | | | | | | |
|-------|--|-----|--|----------|----------------------------------|-----|--|
| 18 | Orroral Valley Classic BR | ACT | (02) 6248 6905 | 30-31 | 24 hr Race M | Qld | www.adventureracing.com.au |
| 18 | JP Myall Lakes Classic C | NSW | www.nswcanoe.org | 30-31 | 24 hr Tas Championships R | Tas | (03) 6223 4405 |
| 18-19 | 6/12 hr R | Qld | www.qldrogaine.asn.au | 31 | Black Hill Challenge BR | SA | (08) 8336 7223 |
| 18-19 | Coochie Muilo Padding C | Qld | www.canoeqld.org.au | 30-2 Nov | Bright Four Peaks BR | Vic | (03) 5755 1507 |
| 19 | Wildwater Race 8 C | WA | www.canoeaw.asn.au | | | | |
| 25 | Marathon Race 8 C | NSW | www.nswcanoe.org | | | | |
| 25 | 12 hr Veterans Challenge R | Vic | (03) 9438 6626 | | | | |
| 25-26 | GLCC State White Water Championships and Barrington Downriver C | NSW | www.nswcanoe.org | | | | |
| 26 | Ted Pace Memorial Marathon C | Vic | www.canoevic.org.au | | | | |

October

| | | | | | | | |
|-------|--|-----|--|-------|--|-----|--|
| 2 | Bendigo Cup C | Vic | www.canoevic.org.au | 4-7 | Bibbulmun Team Challenge Heat 4 B | WA | www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au |
| 2 | Upper Murray Challenge M | Vic | www.uppermurraychallenge.dragnet.com.au | 6 | Northern Marathon Race 6 C | NSW | www.nswcanoe.org |
| 2-3 | Freycinet Lodge Challenge M | Tas | www.tasultra.org.au | 7 | North Canberra Two Peaks Classic BR | ACT | (02) 6248 6905 |
| 7-10 | Bibbulmun Team Challenge Heat 1 B | WA | www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au | 7 | Bridge to Bridge C | Vic | www.canoevic.org.au |
| 9 | Echua Mini Marathon C | Vic | www.canoevic.org.au | 13 | Goulburn River Race C | Vic | www.canoevic.org.au |
| 9 | PVC John Maclean Challenge C | NSW | www.nswcanoe.org | 13-14 | 3 hr Minigripine and Barbecue R | SA | (08) 8271 2712 |
| 10 | 5/10 km State Championships C | Vic | www.canoevic.org.au | 14 | Adventure Navigation Weekend R | Qld | www.qldrogaine.asn.au |
| 10 | Marathon Race 1 C | WA | www.canoeaw.asn.au | 14 | WBCC Wagga Marathon C | NSW | www.nswcanoe.org |
| 14-17 | Bibbulmun Team Challenge Heat 2 B | WA | www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au | 17-21 | NOLS Masters Course B | NSW | (08) 9192 2400 |
| 15-16 | AC Marathon Canoe World Championships C | WA | www canoe.org.au | 21 | Socialogine 6 hr R | NSW | www.nswrogaining.org |
| 16 | Fitzroy Falls Fire Trail Marathon BR | NSW | 0419 515 555 | 27 | The Lake Glenbawn Challenge M | NSW | 0416 080 098 |
| 16-17 | Trailblazer Challenge BR | SA | www.recreationsa.org | 27 | 24 hr Vic Championships R | Vic | (03) 9438 6626 |
| 16-17 | State Marathon Championships C | NSW | www.nswcanoe.org | 28 | Socialogine R | NSW | (02) 9990 3480 |
| 16-17 | AC World Cup C | WA | www.canoe.org.au | 30 | Spring 6/12 hr R | ACT | www.act.rogaine.asn.au |
| 17 | 3/6 hr Metrogline R | Qld | (07) 3369 1641 | 30 | Spring 6/12 hr R | ACT | (02) 6251 6908 |
| 18-21 | Australian Tracks and Trails Conference B | SA | www.southaustraliatrails.com | | | | |
| 20-21 | Gippsland Twin Rivers Classic C | Vic | www.canoevic.org.au | | | | |
| 21-24 | Bibbulmun Team Challenge Heat 3 B | WA | www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au | | | | |
| 22 | Barwon Mini Marathon C | Vic | www.canoevic.org.au | | | | |
| 23 | 6/12 hr R | Vic | (03) 9438 6626 | | | | |
| 23 | Spring 12 hr R | SA | (08) 8271 2712 | | | | |
| 23 | Spring 12 hr R | WA | (08) 9342 9213 | | | | |
| 23-24 | 24 hr NSW Championships R | NSW | (02) 9990 3480 | | | | |
| 24 | Brindabella Classic BR | ACT | www.coorunning.com.au | | | | |
| 25-29 | NOLS Masters Course B | Qld | (08) 9192 2400 | | | | |
| 30-31 | Hawkesbury Canoe Classic C | NSW | www.canoeclassic.asn.au | | | | |

December

| | | | |
|-------|--|-----|--|
| 4 | Ben Ward Memorial Race C | Vic | www.canoevic.org.au |
| 5 | MWKC 20 Reaches Ocean Classic C | NSW | www.nswcanoe.org |
| 19 | Tour de Mountain BR | ACT | (02) 6296 3969 |
| 27-31 | Murray Marathon C | Vic | (03) 8327 7706 |

January 2005

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| 18 | AC Australian Under-15 Tas Wildwater Classic C | www canoe.org.au |
|----|---|--|

February

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|-------|----------------------------|----|--|
| 26-27 | Upside Down 12 hr R | WA | www.wa.rogaine.asn.au |
|-------|----------------------------|----|--|

March

| | | | |
|-------|---|--|--|
| 19 | Autumn 6 hr R | WA | www.wa.rogaine.asn.au |
| 27-28 | AC Australian Marathon NSW Championships C | www.canoe.org.au | |

April

| | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|-----|--|
| 1-3 | Trailwalker Melbourne BR | Vic | www.oxfam.org.au/trailwalker |
| 23 | Autumn 12 hr R | WA | www.wa.rogaine.asn.au |

May

| | | | |
|-------|---|-----|--|
| 21-22 | Australian Rogaine Championships R | Qld | www.qldrogaine.asn.au |
|-------|---|-----|--|

June

| | | | |
|-------|---|----|--|
| 18-19 | Winter 24 hr State Championships R | WA | www.wa.rogaine.asn.au |
|-------|---|----|--|

Activities: **B** bushwalking, **BR** bush running, **C** canoeing, **M** multisports, **R** rogaining. **Organisations:** **AC** Australian Canoeing, **GLCC** Great Lakes Canoe Club, **JP** Just Paddlers, **MWKC** Manly Warringah Kayaking Club, **NOLS** National Outdoor Leadership School, **PVC** Penrith Valley Canoeing, **WBCC** Wagga Bidgee Canoe Club. **Rogaining events** are organised by the State rogaing associations. **Canoeing events** are organised by the State canoeing associations unless otherwise stated.

AUSTRALIAN MOUNTAIN RUNNING CHAMPIONSHIPS

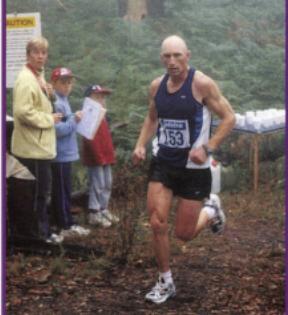
John Harding reports on the results from Mt Buffalo

The 11 kilometre Big Walk in Mt Buffalo National Park, Victoria, starts at the park entrance and offers spectacular views as it winds its way up the mountain, climbing over 1000 metres in altitude.

For the last 25 years a run up the Big Walk on Melbourne Cup Day has provided the finale to the Bright Alpine Four Peaks Climb, which also takes in Mt Porepunkah, Mt Feathertop and Mt Hotham. The four-day event is Australia's premier mountain running experience; visit <http://brightalpineclimb.net.au> for more details.

The Championship returned to Mt Buffalo in April this year. The runners experienced every kind of weather: it was temperate at the start, then foggy before the competitors broke through to bright sunshine with two kilometres to go. There was even a brief shower of snowflakes as Ben du Bois of Wollongong sprinted across Mt Buffalo Oval to win the event in 58 minutes. He has been selected for the Australian team for the World Championship in Italy on 5 September. Steven Page came second and David Osmond placed third. In the women's race, 20-year-old Marnie Ponton from the ACT ran 77 minutes to finish just 12 seconds ahead of Victorian veteran Louise Fairfax. Lisa Barry came third.

Runner-up Steven Page toiling up Mt Buffalo. Alison Sargeant



Sport in the line of fire

Oryana Kaufman follows Team Middle East

It sounds like a highly unlikely scenario—a Palestinian, a Jew and two United Nations aid workers competing against some 25 teams in a three-day 300 kilometre odyssey around a South Pacific island.

The race, organised by the Australian charity Life, Love, Health in conjunction with East Timor's president, Xanana Gusmao, was instigated to promote sport in conflict zones. Teams were required to paddle, ride, run and navigate their way through different terrain and conditions.

Collectively known as Team Middle East (TME), the foursome overcame inclement heat, rugged mountains, sizeable waves and stiff competition. Not only did they come equal first in the mixed cat-

egory and fourth overall, they also offer a glimmer of hope in a desperate situation.

Jerusalem-born Yaron Konigsberg says he saw the race as a way to break down barriers between people living in Israel. It's been great to be part of something that proves the value of sport and to see how positive it can be', he said. Before the race Jennifer Marouf, from the West Bank city of Ramallah, didn't have any Israeli friends and had to get a special visa to enter Israel to train. The other two team members were Australian Mark Squirell and Italian Marc Regnault De La Mothe, employees of the UN World Food Program.

More information about the race can be found at www.lifelovehealth.com/gathering

Wildwater racing

The Australian junior team keeps the ANZAC rivalry alive, by Ben Reitze



The Australian Junior Wildwater Development Team: Ben Baker (left), Ben Reitze, Kim Snowball, Charles Muir, Ryan Longstaff, Tom Misson, Melissa Longstaff, Ben Jones, Tom Bedford and Michael Ford. Amanda Pain

Wild-water racing is a popular sport worldwide. Paddlers race through grade-3 to -4+ water in a craft that weighs only 10 kilograms. The large-volume four-and-a-half metre kayaks are only slightly more stable than flat-water sprint boats, making for spectacular, high-speed crashes. The sport has two events: the Classic is three-six kilometres long, taking 10–25 minutes to complete, while the Sprint entails two runs of a course that is approximately 800 metres long. This year Australia sent the Junior Development Team to New Zealand to take on larger, more challenging rivers.

The team of seven junior- and three senior paddlers travelled to the Tekapo River venue for a Classic style wild-water

race of World Cup standard—the course constantly stopped the boats, demanded tight turns and challenged the paddlers' stability. The Sprint was held on the last 800 metres of the course. The results were close, with Ben Jones from Australia setting the fastest time and taking out the Men's Open Sprint title. Ryan Longstaff won the under-22 class in both the Classic and Sprint events, a feat emulated by the team of Snowball and Muir in the under-18 C2 class. With solid results and valuable racing experience the Aussies travelled to Wanaka, the venue for the New Zealand All Schools Championships.

In total the team won 19 medals at the two events.



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Stealth filming

An attempt to make a war film in the Grose valley, NSW, was prevented after the Land & Environment Court ruled that it was illegal. The *Colony Bulletin* reported that protests against the filming led to six arrests. In June the Filming Approval Bill was passed, introducing a separate development approval process outside the *National Parks & Wildlife Act* that weakens the rules relating to filming in a National Park.

Honoured indeed

Several people in this year's honours lists are of interest to *Wild*. Keith Muir, Executive Director of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness, a NSW conservation organisation, received the Order of Australia Medal for 'service to nature conservation'. Michael Dillon, a cameraman and director of adventure and expedition documentaries and a founding Director of the Australian Himalayan Foundation was awarded the Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the Queen's birthday list. This award recognised his 'service to the Australian film industry as a pioneer in adventure and mountain film cinematography, and to the community through support for international humanitarian work'. Grahame Budd also recently received the AM, for 'service to medicine, particularly human physiology and acclimatisation in extreme climatic conditions, and to scientific research in the Antarctic'.

Compulsory insurance for all?

AdventurePro reports that guides in New Zealand are calling for compulsory accident insurance for those who venture into the country's National Parks and mountains. The cost of search and rescue operations are paid for by the Accident Compensation Corporation—this cost \$5.4 million in the 12 months to April, with around 70 per cent of cases from July to May involving tourists.

Muir's movie wins award

A documentary by Jon Muir and Ian Darling won the prize for best film on exploration at the International Film Festival of Mountains in Trento, Italy. *Alone Across Australia* tells of Muir's solo, unsupported, 2500 kilometre trip from Port Augusta, South Australia, to Burketown in Queensland by foot. (See Info in *Wild* no 83 for further information about the trip.)

Bungonia Gorge caves

Stephen Bunton reports that after 1 October 2004 there will be a permanent ban on the use of wood fires in the Shoal-

R O G G I N

haven Gorge, Bungonia Gorge and the camping ground. Visitors to the area should register seven days before arrival. Access to caves within the adjoining property of 'Carne' is closed permanently. Spring Creek canyon is closed indefinitely due to rock instability and entry may incur heavy fines. Visitors should be cautious in Long Gully Canyon due to rock instability. For current Bungonia news, phone (02) 4844 4341 or visit www.npwgs.gov.au

Lock climbs Everest, again

Australian mountaineer Andrew Lock climbed Mt Everest by the South-east Ridge in May, completing his second ascent of the mountain (see his profile in *Wild* no 91). He was filming during the ascent and this footage will apparently be made into a six-hour documentary.

Great Ocean Walk

A new 91 kilometre track from Apollo Bay to near the 12 Apostles, Victoria, is scheduled to open in June next year. The track has received around \$2 million in funding.

Road closure

Russell Willis reports that all public access to the Drysdale River National Park, Northern Territory, by Carson River Station has been closed. This was the only public vehicle access to the park.

Hut rebuilt

The first cattlemen's hut to be rebuilt in the Alpine National Park was completed recently. McNamara's Hut, near Falls Creek, Victoria, was rebuilt by volunteers. Federation, Cleve Cole and Michell Hut are among other huts expected to be rebuilt in Victoria.

City2City complete

Huw Kingston reached Hobart in May after a 69-day canoeing and walking trip from Melbourne. This completed his project: to travel between each Australian capital by a

challenging, human-powered route. In total, the seven stages took 543 days, during which he covered 25 600 kilometres.

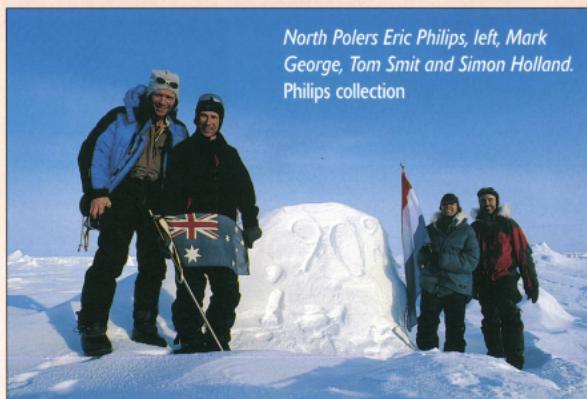
Degree of separation

Eric Philips recently guided a three-person team, including two Australians, for 'the last degree' to the North Pole. The team travelled the 112 kilometres from 89°N in eight days, encountering temperatures as low as -35°C.

search will be useful for planning a landing on Mars! The trip raised money for the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Tracks 'n' trails

The third Australian Tracks and Trails Conference is being held from 18 to 21 October in Hahndorf, South Australia. The conference may be of interest to those who have professional and personal interests in tracks and will deal with subjects such as



North Polers Eric Philips, left, Mark George, Tom Smit and Simon Holland. Philips collection

Simpson solo prepares for Mars

South Australian Rob Porcaro recently walked solo across the Simpson Desert by its most difficult route, the Madigan Line. He did the 566 kilometre trip in 17 days, hauling a cart before abandoning it for a rucksack. During the trip he conducted nightly performance tests as part of a research project into how cognitive performance is affected by extreme environment, fatigue and isolation. Apparently it is hoped that the re-

creation, transport, planning, tourism, environment and heritage as they relate to tracks for walkers, cyclists, riders, canoeists and divers.

Outdoor ethics

Leave No Trace Australia is a non-profit organisation that seeks to promote responsible outdoor travel and recreation. It has released several booklets on environmental skills and ethics for the Australian bush that can be ordered from www.lnt.org.au for \$7 each. ☺

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS...

Chris Bell, Tasmanian nature photographer and president of the Tasmanian National Parks Association, is leaving his whole estate to The Wilderness Society through their bequest programme, Forever Wild. At present Bell is working on his fifth book but considers himself a 'naturalist first and foremost and a photographer second'. He believes that: The reward for safeguarding our reassuring wilderness is an assured future full of variety, mystery and wonder: the cost of not doing

so is an emptiness, a spiritual void, a longing—which will never be assuaged—for beauty and life forfeited. Money is directed to the WildCountry project, an Australia-wide programme designed to protect our wild places and wildlife while also helping to define the path toward restoration. Bell believes that this approach is great as areas must be linked up; you can't have a National Park in isolation. More details about the programme can be found at www.wilderness.org.au

CORRECTIONS AND AMPLIFICATIONS

The photo on pages 52–53 of *Wild* no 92 was taken from Carruthers Peak and shows the Sentinel. The heading 'One parks legislation to rule them all' on page 79 of *Wild* no 93 is misleading. Environmental groups believe that the three States will never adopt one parks legislation and are looking for ways around this, such as incorporating the existing Management Agreement into each State Government's parks legislation.

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au

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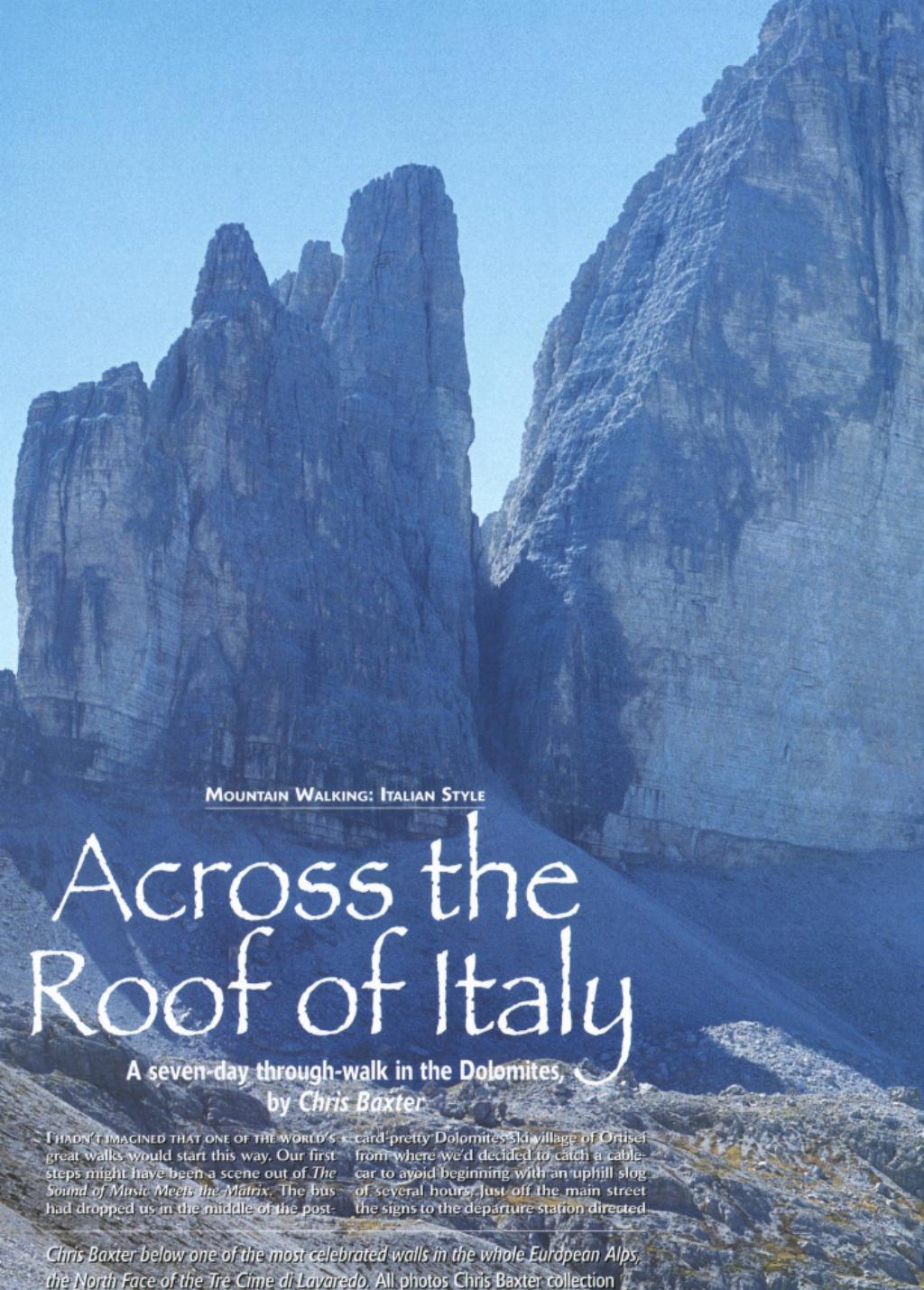
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MOUNTAIN WALKING: ITALIAN STYLE

Across the Roof of Italy

A seven-day through-walk in the Dolomites

by Chris Baxter

I HADN'T IMAGINED THAT ONE OF THE WORLD'S great walks would start this way. Our first steps might have been a scene out of *The Sound of Music Meets the Matrix*. The bus had dropped us in the middle of the post-

card-pretty Dolomites ski village of Ortisei from where we'd decided to catch a cable-car to avoid beginning with an uphill slog of several hours. Just off the main street the signs to the departure station directed

Chris Baxter below one of the most celebrated walls in the whole European Alps, the North Face of the Tre Cime di Lavaredo. All photos Chris Baxter collection



us into the entrance of a yawning neon-and-steel cave—a space-park version of Luna Park's entrance mouth. The longest escalator we'd ever seen reared alarmingly in front of us, its top out of sight somewhere far above. Feeling rather foolish with our mountain-walking clothes, rucksacks and trekking poles, we began our mountain traverse by gliding effortlessly to the heights, department-store style, grateful that there was little chance of meeting someone we knew.

It was a relief to arrive at the cable-car station. At least in the cable-car there was no ambiguity about our mode of travel. Swinging through the air from pylon to pylon above a growing abyss, concerns about the reliability of the structure replaced those of how we might look to others.

Leaving the sunny valley, my shorts and shirtsleeves had drawn bemused—ineluctable and disapproving even—looks from our fellow travellers. Mostly serious-looking German *bergfährers*, they appeared to be equipped for anything that the mountains might throw at them on their day walk. They followed one of the several walking tracks from the cable-car's top station back to the valley in time to tuck into substantial dinners of dumplings and goulash. (For the next week we were to be constantly reminded that the Dolomites seem to be more the preserve of German speakers than Italians.)

The cable-car had scarcely stopped in its precipitous docking bay when the *bergfährers* stormed out, headed for the four winds, and left us floundering to gather our meagre possessions. From the cable-car we had noticed that the surrounding landscape was liberally covered in a late-season snowfall from the previous day. Stepping outside, we were hit by a snow-laden blast of such bitter cold and violence that we immediately stumbled back inside the station to reconsider the situation—and to put on all our protective clothing.

Several tracks radiated from the cable-car station like spokes from a wheel—the next problem was to determine which of them was ours. Our track notes and map were helpful but inconclusive and the plethora of signs only added to the uncertainty. I hadn't expected

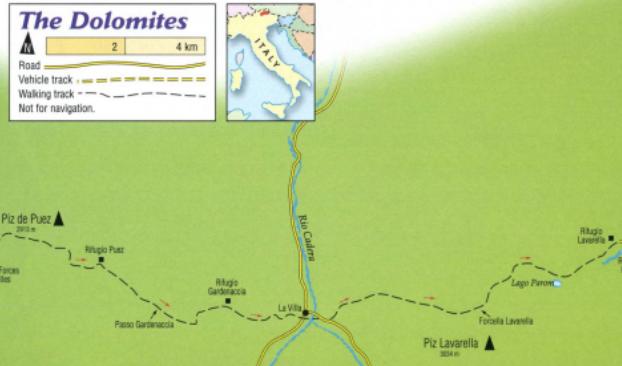
to have to use the compass, at least not before leaving the cable car station, but it seemed to resolve the issue. So off we headed into the teeth of the gale, tentatively at first, on what we felt what was probably—but by no means certainly—our track.

We had travelled three-quarters of the way round the world to be among the soaring

limestone walls and inaccessible summits for which the Dolomites are renowned. Immediately we were among them. Our way lay through high alpine pastures dotted with limestone boulders and patches of the recent snowfall. Above and ahead were mighty peaks and precipices; far below to our right was the valley we'd left that morning and



Picture-postcard scenery between Forcella Forces de Sielles and Rifugio Puez.



above was a leaden sky which spat flurries of dry snow and fierce, chilling winds—a classically operatic setting for a grand production of the *Flight of the Valkyries*. The *bergföhren* had disappeared into the mist. The track was ours alone—a situation that continued for the next seven days with only brief exceptions.

Our well-defined track undulated—neither gaining nor losing significant height—as it headed generally east towards our first objective, Forcella Forces de Sielles (2505 metres), a col that dominated the horizon ahead above a scree slope of Himalayan-looking proportions. Only days before we'd left for Italy I'd managed to tear my calf

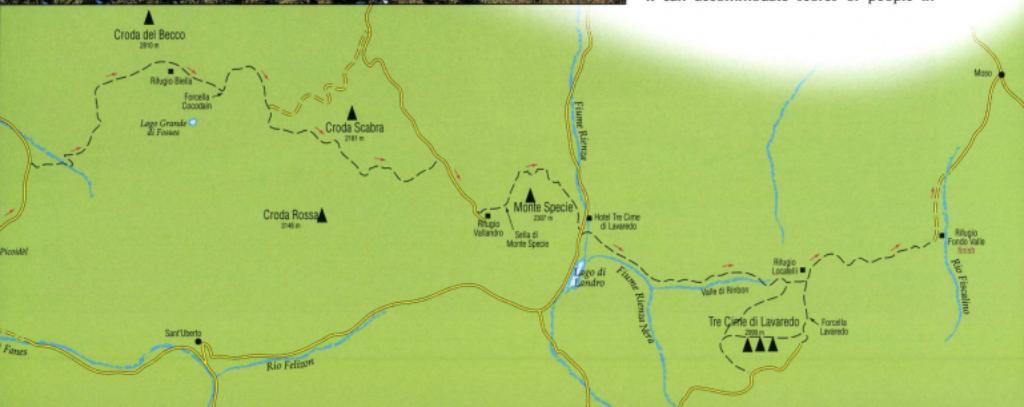
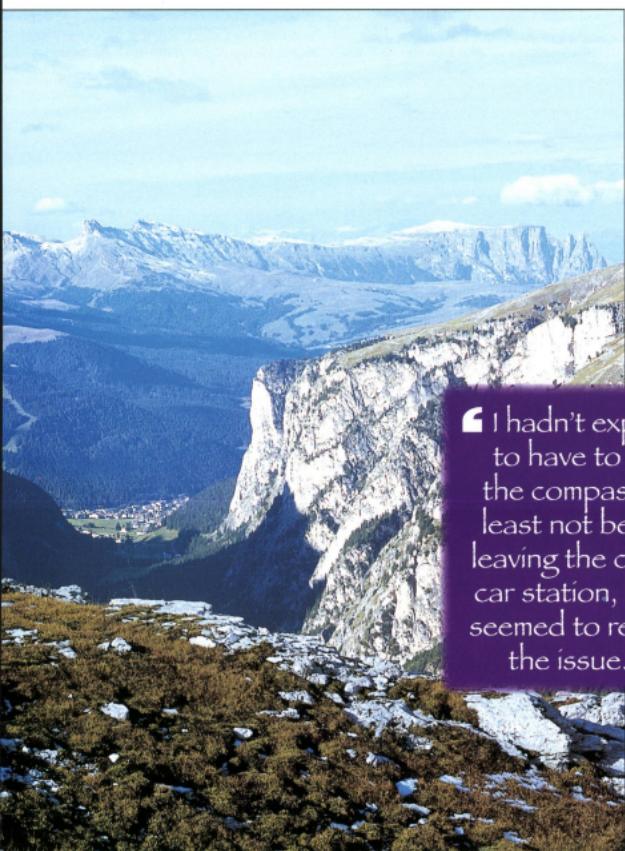
muscle. My physiotherapist, himself a rather gung-ho outdoors type, had looked dubious when I told him of our planned itinerary, pronouncing that my condition required weeks to heal properly and that if trouble were to arise then steep hills, in particular, were likely to be the culprit.

Fortunately, the scree slope leading to Forcella Forces de Sielles was less formidable than it had appeared from a distance. The outlook from this narrow col at its top was breathtaking. At our feet was a precipitous drop where it seemed that no person could go; beyond it our route threaded through a vista of jagged limestone teeth stretching to the horizon below a shroud of wind-driven, black cloud. The ridge to a lofty summit to our right looked anything but walking country. The only possible way forward was the ridge to our left. Our track notes showed that we'd encounter the first of a number of steel cables which protected the more precipitous sections. While we are both experienced rock-climbers, and thus at home in exposed situations, we did not carry any belay equipment and were uncertain what to expect. Some full-blown cabled routes (or *via ferrati*, as they are known) are major undertakings in precipitous settings where a mistake could mean

more than just the end of your trip. Despite the fierce wind tearing at our clothes, we need not have worried—this first cable, at least, was of no concern. It was almost redundant as we scrambled up the rocky ridge from ledge to comforting ledge without the yawning abyss we had imagined snapping at our heels.

Beyond the ridge we continued over relatively flat ground through more alpine pastures. These formed a vast basin suspended between rocky summits on our left and mighty cliffs on our right, plunging to toy villages picked out by shafts of late-afternoon sunlight breaking through the gloom in the valley far below. Eventually we rounded a ridge and the Rifugio Puez, our objective for the day, swung into view. Perched dramatically on the rim of the mighty plunge to the valley, the Puez is a typical Dolomites 'hut'. A two-storey stone structure, it can accommodate scores of people in

I hadn't expected to have to use the compass, at least not before leaving the cable-car station, but it seemed to resolve the issue.



warmth and comfort, regardless of the conditions outside. More like an up-market backpackers' dormitory hotel than a hut—with its own bar, excellent but simple restaurant facilities and, of course, a cappuccino machine—such establishments are truly 'refuges' that make any trials and tribulations experienced in reaching them seem bearable! Each has its own warden to supervise the hut, and a cook. There are comfortable bunks (you don't even need a sleeping-bag, just an inner sheet), flushing toilets, running water and sometimes

even hot showers. Walking in the Dolomites is a far cry from the Australian bushwalking experience. And, what's more, you can enjoy it with an embarrassingly empty pack. Although she'd found the first day trying on account of injury and fatigue, while kicking back with a cappuccino after a fortifying pre-dinner brandy and hearty three-course dinner, Sue reflected that—provided she had a good night's sleep, and the same accommodation beckoned at the end of the next day—she might be able to face the new day!

The new day was nevertheless a daunting prospect as it was still cold and windy. But the staggeringly awesome scenery as we wound our way along a broad ridge made sure that we soon forgot any early discomfort. Indeed, by the time we reached that day's high point at Passo Gardena (2548 metres) the sun was making its first serious attempt to appear since we'd left the valley. Ahead, almost at our feet but 1128 metres lower, was our day's objective, the picture-perfect alpine village of La Villa. The mighty wall of



red Dolomite cliffs, the Piz Lavarella, reared beyond. It was a sobering thought that the next day we'd have to climb the same height from La Villa to reach the only apparent weakness in this barrier, the Forcella Lavarella (2533 metres).

A plunging descent leads to the tree line a little above the Rifugio Gardenaccia. The café terrace in front of this imposing three-storey structure was bathed in sunshine so we decided that it was the place to eat our own relatively simple lunch. A family of

English day walkers enjoying a more lavish repast sheepishly confessed to having used the chair-lift, leaving them with a relatively mild climb to the hut, their destination before returning to La Villa. Despite a subversive suggestion that we emulate the poms' example, I'm proud to report that we reached the valley under our own steam! It's just as well, as our hotel accommodation, although moderately priced, turned out to be pure decadence. The only problem was that our only 'inside' footwear was hut slippers (and

in my case, a shabby pair of airline hand-outs at that). We were acutely conscious that they simply didn't cut it with the well-heeled, cashmere-clad tourists whom we joined, arriving conspicuously late, in the hotel's opulent dining room.

It was with mixed feelings that we left this lap of luxury the next morning to confront a climb that one of our sets of track notes describes as 'nothing short of horrendous, a four-hour uphill slog where the summit never seems to get any nearer'. We left the village in the perfect weather that accompanied us for the rest of our walk and climbed steadily through steep alpine pastures and pine forest. A massive scree slope eventually led to the Forcella Lavarella where we were greeted by a biting wind and a group of Italian day walkers who seemed a long way from where you might expect to find such smartly dressed people. At our feet, La Villa had again assumed its 'toy village' stature of 24 hours earlier.

We made a gradual descent across a spectacular limestone plateau ringed by mountains, which felt strangely like moonscape. Sheets of white rock provided a delightful footing as we wended and undulated towards the evening's objective, the Rifugio Lavarella. The hut finally came into view when we arrived at the head of an exquisitely beautiful valley dotted with stunted pines and fascinating limestone boulders and outcrops. However, as often happens at such times, seeing it was one thing, getting to it was quite another. We must have been more tired than we had thought because, in truth, this final section was neither long nor unduly difficult. The hut is at a road head and many well-dressed day walkers were enjoying the late afternoon sun as they quaffed a wondrous array of victuals on the terrace in front of the charmingly Hansel-and-Gretel-esque hut.

We were travelling light, without camping gear, so had booked space in each hut from Australia to be sure of accommodation every night. Australians were apparently something of a novelty in this part of the world and the warden of each hut greeted us with expectation and great interest. (Indeed, throughout the entire walk we were to encounter very few people from English-speaking countries.) The Lavarella was no exception. On announcing ourselves to the barmaid she responded in highly animated English: 'All the way from Australia! Yes, we've been expecting you—a pronouncement mockingly repeated with mischievous flourish by her smirking younger brother who had mysteriously appeared to attend to his drink-waiting duties just as we entered. The girl then announced that (at no extra cost) they'd saved us 'the honeymoon suite' instead of the usual dormitory accommodation! Intrigued,

we were suddenly confronted by a wild-eyed pair of men of vaguely military appearance. They seemed keen to convey to us that our proposed route entailed the possibility of our being shot!

The Rifugio Vallandro, left, vies with an Austrian fort from the First World War for the best view of the magnificent Cristallino.

we were shown to a delightful but narrow room with end-to-end single beds next to the family's own private quarters. While such unexpected perks were raising Sue's tolerance to hardship on the track, I was beginning to doubt that I would be able to lure her on to an Australian one again!

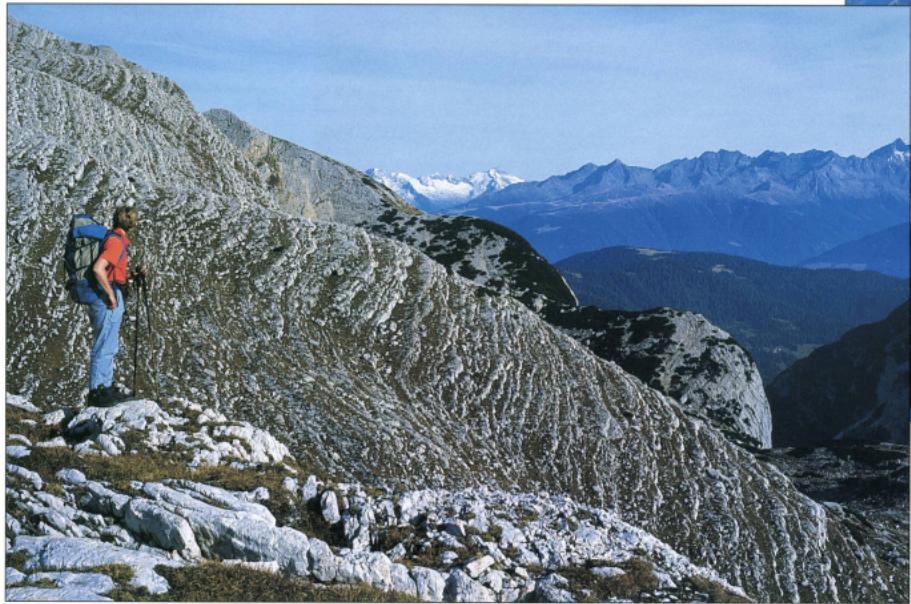
The morning brought a return to the real world with a road-bash down to another—even busier—hut, then up the steepest sealed road we'd ever seen to a high limestone plateau similar to that of the previous day. The upside of the road-bash was the perfect weather, completely vehicle-free roads and towering limestone buttresses and peaks that lined the steep valley we descended. The plateau was an unforgettable place and we enjoyed its largely unspoiled beauty with a feeling of isolation, although we passed the occasional walker. One of our sets of track notes describes the Rifugio Biella as 'set in an unforgettable lunar landscape'. The wonderful, old, three-storey structure nestles against the sun-drenched white slabs of the limestone dome of Croda del Becco (2810 metres).

The next morning's route entailed some of the most spectacular walking of our trip.

land of white rock outcrops and stunted pines with the snow-clad Austrian Alps as a backdrop. A succession of track intersections ensured that we consulted our map and notes regularly. During one stop we were suddenly confronted by a disreputable-looking and wild-eyed pair of men of vaguely military appearance. However, because of their dishevelled and unkempt appearance it was not easy to be sure. Babbling and gesticulating excitedly, they appeared to be lost and consulted our map, which apparently left them wiser. They seemed keen to convey to us that our proposed route entailed the possibility of our being shot! Fortunately, their only 'weapon' was an outsize flag-pole and correspondingly voluminous standard—indeed, they carried nothing else. Hastening to put some distance between them and us, we soon arrived at a shepherd's hut, with a sign announcing 'Kangaroos for the next 100 km'. Amazingly, the owner had spent some time in Australia and spoke perfect English. Indicating a platoon of soldiers camped nearby, he told us that the Italian Army was conducting a major exercise in the region and that anyone straying into the wrong—but not

Planet track notes: 'The trail narrows and there is a sheer drop, but there are fixed iron cords to hold... This section is quite exposed and might pose some difficulty... It requires a careful step...' It did, indeed, and was too daunting for a party of trendily dressed, young Italian day walkers we met coming towards us at the crux and who turned back at the sight of it. In the event, however, the exposed section was short and proved to be no cause for alarm.

Gaining the crest of the next ridge, we caught our first glimpse of the most famous mountain in the Dolomites, the Tre Cime di Lavaredo with their impossibly vertical north faces. A significant descent to a valley followed, and a different world of BMWs and affluent, *lederhosen*-clad tourists and day walkers swarming like bees around a hotel honey-pot. Our day ended with a road-bash to the Rifugio Vallandro, spectacularly situated next to a ruined Austrian fort



Sue Baxter looks towards Austria from near the Forcella Cocodain.

First we followed a narrow, rocky ridge with fine views north to the Austrian Alps (which by now appeared very close) and south to the depths of Lago (Lake) Grande di Fosses. This led to the day's high point at Forcella Cocodain (2332 metres), a col below the imposing red bulk of Croda Rossa. Swinging north, we descended into an unspoiled fairy-

clearly defined-area indeed risked being shot. He asked if we'd seen their scouts, and laughed but was not surprised by our description of them. At our request he checked with the soldiers and returned with the 'all clear' for us to continue on our intended route, which traversed the North Face of the Croda Rossa. It is described in our Lonely

from the First World War. Monte Cristallo was opposite and treated us to a riot of changing pinks as the setting sun picked out its myriad, sharp-etched features.

The new day promised to be short and spectacular, with an hotel at its end. (Lonely Planet mentions 'some very exposed sections... equipped with iron cords' and, 'if this worries

'you', suggests an alternative route.) The climb from the hut to Sella di Monte Specie (col) was relieved by outstanding views of Monte Cristallo and Croda Rossa. On the col we came across the first of several Austrian fortifications from the First World War that we were to encounter during our 800 metre plunge to the valley. The track then follows a 'gorge with the lot', including a

ing as a callow 20-something. I had managed to prevail on only the smallest of them, and had left the region after the deaths of two Australasian companions who fell whilst attempting the largest. For me at least, the day was to be something of a pilgrimage.

The climb was indeed the anticipated 'full-body workout' but when we abruptly crested the inclined plateau below the Tre Cime

The scenery was breathtaking right to the end as the track descended a gorge flanked by 1000 metre cliffs soaring in mighty buttresses to inaccessible summits. The rock-climber in me winced at the lifetimes of climbing we skipped past in this valley alone.

Only 20 minutes from the road head (where we had a bus to catch early the next day) is a magnificent, brand new 'hut', the

Chris Baxter,

founding Managing Editor of *Wild*, has loved walking and climbing in the mountains since childhood. While he is always hungry for new experiences, his heart is in the high country of south-eastern Australia, including Tasmania's incomparable South-west.



Chris Baxter lost amidst a sea of limestone between the Rifugio Puez and the Passo Gardenaccia.

cable-equipped ledge cut into a vertical cliff high enough to not even *think* about falling off, a tunnel hewn through a spur of solid rock, and a ladder. The roar of traffic that greeted us as we approached the Hotel Tre Cime (or, more strictly, the 'Due Cime' as only two of the famous three peaks are visible from it!) was not enough to lessen our anticipation of the creature comforts awaiting us.

According to our map our last full day in the mountains entailed a relentless climb of 1000 metres, followed by an equally relentless descent of almost the same height. The reward for such masochism, however, would be that at the high point we would traverse close below the impossibly sheer North Faces of the Tre Cime which I had dreamed of scal-

our tiredness fell away as we gaped, open-mouthed, at their awesome verticality. However, it seemed that most of Europe wished to pay homage to these iconic peaks, which feature in as many Italian brand names as kangaroos do in Australian ones. An army of human ants was pouring over the Forcella Lavaredo on the track leading to the access road hidden from us just below it. By the time we reached the Rifugio Locatelli (2405 metres), where we stopped for lunch diagonally opposite the faces, it was circus time. And still the hordes kept coming in their hundreds.

It was with mixed feelings—and not a few 'last looks back'—that we began the long descent that also marked the last stage of our trans-Dolomite adventure.

Rifugio Fondo Valle. When we arrived, dusty and footsore, it was swarming with day-trippers drinking and laughing in the late afternoon sun on its terrace. After finding our beds (in a dormitory which we had to ourselves) and a hot shower, we lost no time in joining them. However, after achieving so much, the trip ended on sad twin notes of defeat. First, Sue was not equal to the ridiculously full balloon she was given upon ordering a celebratory brandy. (She was even heard to swear off the drink. How long that unlikely pledge was to last is best kept as a family secret.) Then, to add insult to injury, so enormous was the dinner (included in the cost of our accommodation 'package') that, to the incredulity of the waitress, we had to decline dessert.

ULTRA-LIGHTWEIGHT

Roger Caffin explains how to lighten your load

WHEN I WAS A WILDLY ENTHUSIASTIC UNIVERSITY STUDENT I DID several long, exploratory trips through South-west Tasmania. Even with air drops we had to carry a lot of gear—my pack weighed more than 30 kilograms. I would sit down in front of the rucksack, put the straps over my shoulders and be helped to my knees by friends before I could stand up. Well, fine, but no more, thank you! My wife and I want to enjoy bushwalking, not suffer through it.

First we got rid of a lot of unnecessary, heavy gear—as such as a two kilogram machete! Then I replaced some antique stuff with modern gear. We thought we were doing well when my pack for a seven-day trip only weighed 22 kilograms. However, it was still very heavy and we began to wonder how light we could go while staying safe and comfortable.

Crawling around the Web, I found that there is a new style of walking known in the USA as 'ultra-lightweight', or UL. The guru is said to be Ray Jardine, author of *Beyond Backpacking*. However, more than half of his book is really off with the fairies and is largely ignored. Some of his ideas sound good but equally good are the new materials being used to make the UL gear; they're much lighter than the stuff you see in Australian shops. So I began to prune and convert our gear.

To cut a long story short, this table (right) illustrates the weight savings, just for gear:

That's right, we have taken more than 18 kilograms off the weight of our combined gear. For a six- to seven-day trip in the Blue Mountains I would carry less than 15 kilograms while my wife would carry approximately 12 kilograms, including food, several litres of water and everything else we need (even rope). It's not theory, it's real—we have been walking this way for years and can we feel the difference! Once I carry less than 16 kilograms things just seem much lighter and I have better balance on tricky country too.



Ultra-lightweight summer tent, 1.26 kilograms complete, and ultra-lightweight rucksack, 800 grams. All photos Roger Caffin

If you want further details visit www.bushwalking.org.au/FAQ/ and look under Ultra-lightweight and DIY. You could also check the WildGUIDE *Equipment for Bushwalking* by Chris Baxter from Wild no 87 or the article 'Going Light' from Wild no 24.

TENT

I want a two-person tent with a groundsheet and full insect proofing. The new materials excel here. My old tent used material that weighed more than 70 grams a square metre (gsm) with a low water-pressure rating; my new tents (which I make and sell) use 44 gsm silnylon with a high pressure rating. I've cut out a lot of excess weight (such as webbing that is rated to one ton) and switched from aluminium- to carbon-fibre poles for some tents. You can also

| Item | Old weight, grams | New weight, grams | Comments |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--|
| Rucksack | 2600 | 800 | New materials, not designed for 90 litres |
| Tent (summer) | 3800 | 1260 | New materials, not designed for Mt Everest |
| Sleeping-bag | 1700 | 690 | Summer weight, not for snow use |
| Sleeping-mat | 880 | 880 | Deluxe Therm-a-Rest: we spend all night on it |
| Waterproof jacket | 870 | 250 | Skip the Gore-Tex: choose light PU-proofed nylon |
| Overpants | 510 | 0 | Not needed in summer |
| Jumper | 710 | 260 | Adequate; about Polartec 100 in summer |
| Boots | 2000 | 330 | You simply don't need boots |
| Stove | 500 | 70 | Skip the liquid fuel, go with gas |
| Fuel in container | 420 | 340 | Surprise! Gas is lighter |
| Cooking gear | 500 | 230 | Single bowl rather than several |
| First aid, repair | 700 | 200 | Never used most of it anyhow |
| Water-bottles | 250 | 50 | Large PET bottles, at \$0 each |
| Camera | 2500 | 500 | A good automatic does 90 per cent of an SLR |
| Total of above | 17940 | 5860 | Difference: 12.08 kilograms |
| Total for two | 27210 | 8270 | Difference: 18.14 kilograms |

NIGHT WALKING

import silnylon tarp-tents from the USA, but these have really limited space and generally don't keep the mosquitoes out.

I have taken my tents ski-touring, on a six-week traverse of the French Pyrenees, and regularly used them in the Australian Alps and the Blue Mountains with great success. You can see them on the FAQ Web site.

RUCKSACK

The conventional internal-frame rucksacks look nice, and many of them have good harnesses that allow you to carry really heavy loads quite well, but they are heavy. If your gear is lighter, you don't need such a large, heavy pack.

Finding suitable lightweight packs in Australia is hard. The really light ones are mainly from the USA but many of them are just too light for off-track use in our bush: our scrub shreds them. I have started to make my own using light, modern synthetics and more functional designs. My packs are a little smaller: with the light gear I don't need a 90 litre pack any more, but they can still carry up to 20 kilograms with the same comfort as an internal frame pack.

There is a myth that all synthetic packs leak. Twenty years ago, when the synthetic materials quickly lost their waterproof coating they used to, but technology has moved on. My older canvas packs let water in too, so I pack my gear in ultra-light stuff sacks lined with plastic bags.

SLEEPING-BAG

We have heavy winter bags, good down to -20°C but why should we use them in the middle of summer when the nights may be 20°C? We used to sleep on top of them for most of the night in summer. So we bought very light 'liner' bags (Mont Nitro) for three-season use. With thermals on and snuggled up with my wife, this bag has sufficed down to 0°C—there was frost on the ground outside. There are a couple of other Australian/New Zealand models in this class, but not many. I would love to try some of the huge range of American UL bags but most are not available here and they are not cheap.

The secret with a light sleeping-bag is to keep your head warm. People complain that their feet are cold and wear thick socks while their head is uninsulated. Your body will keep your head warm no matter what, even if your feet are getting frostbite. Use the hood on your bag—if you don't like it pulled tightly around your head, turn the bag upside down and throw the hood loosely over your head. I do this all the time—it's just like being under a Doona at home. It's far roomier and I don't suffocate.

RAINWEAR

Flame war territory: do you need a heavy, expensive, Gore-Tex jacket? Despite all the advertising hype, the reality is that you will



Standard and ultra-lightweight waterproof jackets.

I would sit in front of the rucksack, put the straps over my shoulders and be helped to my knees by friends before I could stand up. ▶

get wet in bad weather, as Baxter also points out. You cannot seal yourself in a jacket and continue working hard in Australian conditions; you would boil to death. The rain goes up your sleeves, it blows under the hem, it comes in down the neck. All the jacket can do is deflect the wind and some rain, and we find a breathable UL nylon jacket does this just as well. Curiously enough, our UL jackets have lasted just as well as our various Gore-Tex ones. Overpants are only needed in alpine regions and our UL ones have lasted for many years.

It is interesting to go walking overseas or to cruise the overseas Web sites for rainwear to see what others wear. Australia is the only country I have found where Gore-Tex has any serious

hold on the rainwear market—it is barely visible in the overseas catalogues. I have asked why and there were various answers: too stiff, too expensive; too heavy. In France everyone wears capes and ponchos—they breathe better and can be put on over your pack easily and quickly in a sudden shower.

WARM CLOTHING

This is another area where light, modern synthetics have completely superseded natural fibres. Forget cotton and wool: they cannot compete. The fleece fabrics that Malden Mills pioneered are lighter, warmer and stronger—and stay warm even when wet. Give them a squeeze and a shake and they are back in business. Con-



Above, standard and ultra-lightweight tops.
Right, standard and ultra-lightweight stoves.

trust that to the pathetic state of a wet wool jumper for wet jeans).

Equally valuable are modern thermal tops and long johns. At the end of the day, when you are tired, cold, soaking wet and are finally in your tent, strip off everything, dry off and put on a set of these. Warmth and comfort return at once. If it's a bit cold at night you can happily wear them in your sleeping-bag as well. It's best to avoid the cheap ones though: quality pays.

You don't need to take lots of warm clothing; take just enough but keep it dry. I wear a nylon shirt and trousers while walking except in snow conditions. Sometimes I might wear a thermal top for the first half hour but I take it off as soon as I can, before it gets sweaty. If it's raining I prefer to wear a shirt and nylon jacket rather than risk getting my thermal top wet. Working hard keeps me warm.

I should add a note here about trousers. It seems that Victorians favour shorts while many in New South Wales favour long trousers. The scrub in NSW has something to do with this.

FOOTWEAR

There isn't room to go into the great footwear debate here: it's worse than the rainwear debate and has been covered by differing people with many views in many places including the FAQ and *Wild*. Suffice to say that we wear lightweight footwear everywhere except on skis. This includes some of the harshest terrain in Wollemi National Park and on extended trips in the European Alps and in the UK. I believe that our ankles are at less risk in light, flexible footwear than in heavy, clumsy boots and that we get better grip. Remember: US military tests have shown that in terms of fatigue one kilogram on your feet is equivalent to seven kilograms on your back, and light footwear is much cheaper too.

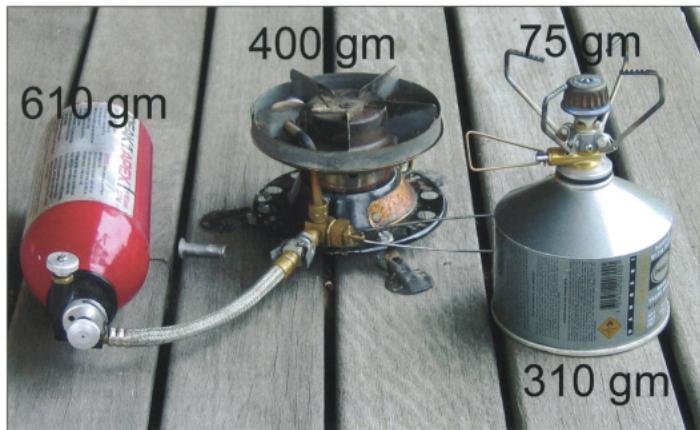
WATER

We own heavy plastic and aluminium water-bottles but, like Baxter, we take 1.25 litre PET bottles originally used for sparkling mineral water or other fizzy drinks. They are just so much lighter (and, again, cheaper). You might wonder how long they last: mine last for several years of frequent use. I tried filling one up and throwing it in the air over soil: it survived quite happily. I even dropped it on

sheet rock several times: it still survived. Good enough for me. Don't trust the new plastic milk bottles though; the cap pops off.

We also take an empty wine bladder to carry more water for the evening, and for carrying up to high camps. We need about three litres for the two of us for a comfortable high camp. The wine bladder costs nothing (cost written off with the wine!) and weighs very little—far less than the commercial hydration systems' you can buy. Incidentally, field tests at www.backpackgewartest.org of some commercial units have shown many failures and leaks.

One thing on which we do not skimp is water safety. We carry a water filter and use it at all times. Baxter reckons he has never had any problems drinking straight from Victorian creeks. Well, the Snowy Mountains and the Blue Mountains are much more risky and I, for one, have suffered.



STOVE

I have a large collection of stoves—sad but true. Over the years stove weights have been decreasing and I now use a 70 gram gas stove. Some people believe that gas weighs too much but look at the actual figures for a five-night trip (and a full gas canister):



Standard water-bottle and common PET bottle.

| | Gas | Liquid fuel |
|----------------|------------|--------------------|
| Stove | 70 grams | 500 grams |
| Fuel | 220 grams | 300 grams |
| Fuel container | 120 grams | 120 grams |
| Total | 410 grams | 920 grams |

These figures come from my records of what I have been carrying on trips over the years. Yes, by weight gas is more efficient than liquid fuel, and liquid fuel stoves are expensive. Gas is easier to light, safer to use and can simmer very nicely. Enough said.

COOKING GEAR

Let's face it: everything you eat is going to end up in the one stomach. I cook the evening dinner in one pot: the rice or pasta goes in with the rest. The pot is a very light, stainless steel one made in Thailand. Titanium ones are even lighter but very expensive. However, for convenience I sometimes take our Trangia kettle to boil water for tea, Deb mashed potatoes, soup and so on.

We take a spoon and a knife each and a billy grip. All the rest of the amazing range of cooking gear you see in the shops is superfluous—and extra weight.

FOOD

There are two approaches to catering. The first is to cook: this means you need cooking gear and quite often a stove, both of which add extra weight. The second is to take only 'no-cook' food. It may weigh slightly more but for short trips you may still win overall. While I haven't gone quite that far, Baxter has been going 'no-cook' for up to five days. He reckons no-cook meals are the way to go for those nights when you are 'knackered/it's late/it's wet'.

A nice, solid raw muesli makes a good breakfast, even in the snow. The standard biscuits with butter, jam or cheese still make a good lunch although some sweet biscuits are a good idea for when the weather is poor. Neither meal requires cooking or much washing-up. For dinner I like 'Two-Minute Noodle' soup as a reviver, followed by a stew made from a freeze-dried meal and rice

or pasta. These do need cooking, but not much. Morning tea or coffee and an evening cocoa (with Christmas cake) completely justify a stove for us.

The key thing is to make sure the food you are carrying has as little water in it as possible. My food weighs about 700 grams a day, while my wife gets by on about 600 grams a day. We eat well. You can get water from a creek each day; you can not carry enough for several days.

SAFETY

The big question is whether you can go UL and be as safe. Passions run high here, especially among those who have a substantial investment in heavy gear or those who sell it. There are several aspects to this question and these need separate discussion.

Excess or heavy gear does not make you safer. If anything, the extra weight makes you travel slower, become more tired, more prone to stumbling and an ankle injury and less stable on tricky terrain. About the only item we carry which could usefully be duplicated is a thermal top: one for night-time and one for walking in when it is really cold.

Rugged gear may last longer—ten years instead of maybe five. If the lifetime of your gear is your paramount concern, UL is not for you. We are more interested in enjoying our bushwalking trips and if some gear wears out after five years—well, that's a good opportunity to see what's new on the market or to improve the design of the last item I made, which is even more fun. I have been told by some Australian gear manufacturers that this limited lifetime is the reason they do not sell UL gear: they are worried about huge returns from novices who mistreat their gear.

The 'safety margin' of UL gear has been mentioned as a problem but I haven't been able to work out what this means if it isn't referring to the points above. There is a huge range of 'fancy that' gear available in the shops which we simply do not need in the bush, so we don't buy it. But I cannot see that this alters my safety margin.

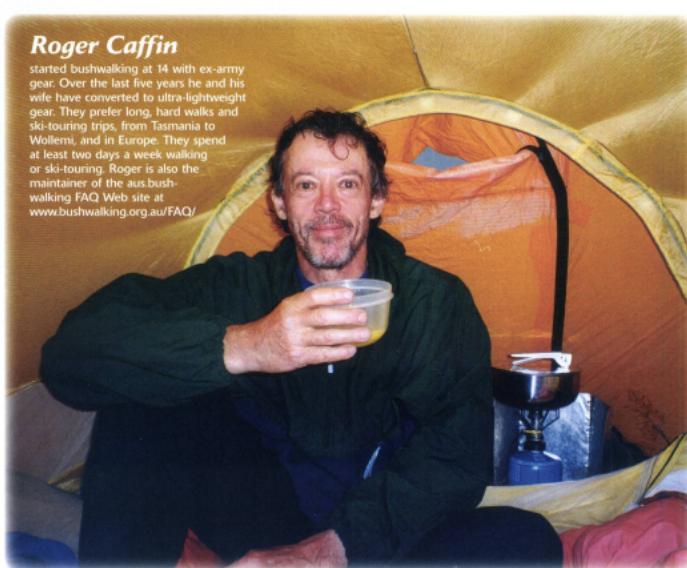
GEAR RELIABILITY

This is the one area where you have to be aware of the limitations of UL gear. It is made of very fine high-tech materials but it is deliberately made lighter. It will not take careless, clumsy bashing. If you ram a tent pole up a pole sleeve without care, you *might* succeed in tearing the tent fabric or breaking the pole. If you drag your pack up the cliff-face on the end of a rope the UL fabric *might* catch and tear more easily—although the modern synthetics do slide over the rock very nicely. If you go swimming with your pack without waterproofing the contents, you won't have much left to keep you warm at night. This happens with heavy gear too, of course.

We accept that our UL gear has a finite life and needs some care, and we plan on replacing it when necessary. There is a cost of course, but the pay-off is the far lighter weight we are carrying, which allows us to go farther and faster with greater ease and comfort. We think the lighter loads mean greater safety as well but your opinion may differ. 

Roger Caffin

started bushwalking at 14 with ex-army gear. Over the last five years he and his wife have converted to ultra-lightweight gear. They prefer long, hard walks and ski-touring trips, from Tasmania to Wollomini, and in Europe. They spend at least two days a week walking or ski-touring. Roger is also the maintainer of the aus.bush-walking FAQ Web site at www.bushwalking.org.au/FAQ/



John and Lyn Daly explore the classic leg of Queensland's Main Range from Spicers Gap to Teviot Gap



*Above, an unusual growth form of a grass-tree in the region. Ross Buchanan.
Right, a walker takes in the panoramic views towards Lizard Point and Mt Barney from the Main Range north of Mt Huntley. Laurence Knight*

ONE NIGHT OVER DINNER THE TALK TURNED to bushwalking—as it does. Halfway through dessert I mentioned that Lyn and I had never completed the traverse from Spicers Gap to Teviot Gap. Comments like, 'You're kidding!', 'Why not?', and 'It's a great walk' bounced back and forth. Barry Ingham, a mate who never allows work to get in the way of a good walk, put down his fork and said, 'Well, let's go'. That was as much encouragement as we needed. After all, the leg of the Main Range traverse from Spicers to Teviot has long been considered one of Queensland's classics.

I bounced the plan off a few friends who were busy that weekend but when Ros Firster heard we were going she said, 'Count me in, I've never done the whole thing either'. Geoff Lorkin was another eager starter. We set a date, checked water-points with the local ranger and secured our permits. We were set for a three-day traverse through untracked country that entailed ascending and descending 14 mountains above 1000 metres!

The day before we were due to leave Barry called; he had food poisoning and had

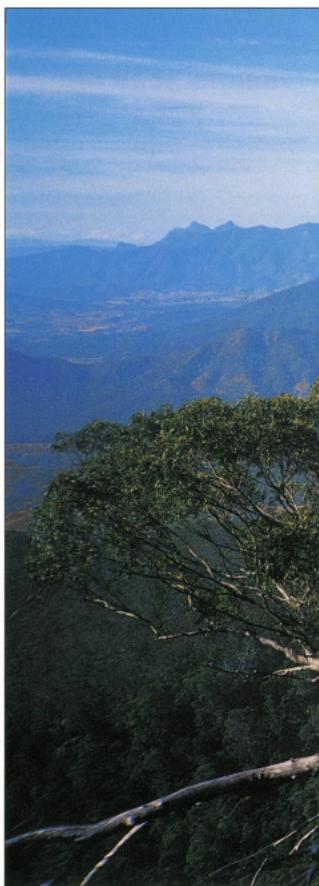
been crook for three days! And he was the only one who had been there before. By the next morning he thought he'd be okay and we met at the Dugandan Pub outside Boonah that afternoon. Barry still looked a bit green. As it was hot he had left his tent and sleeping-bag at home so that he could travel light—his day pack was filled with only food and a groundsheet.

We left his car at Teviot Gap and drove back to the Spicers Gap camping ground to spend the night. Geoff and Ros arrived at 8 am the next morning and we headed up the road to Governors Chair picnic area to start the walk.

A sign at the lookout said: 'WARNING! Vertical cliff. Fatal injuries may result from walking or climbing around the cliff-edge.' The previous night's rain had settled the dust and the view from Governors Chair Lookout extended across the Fassifern valley to Mts Walker, Edwards, French, Greville, Moon and Maroon. It was no surprise that we had each climbed all of them. A narrow foot-pad led us uphill through typical Main Range terrain—open sclerophyll forest dotted

with tall grass-trees. As we gained elevation the blunt, triangular face of Spicers Peak loomed through the trees. I had a spring in my step as we followed a distinct route towards a vantage point at the edge of the escarpment. From here we could see part of our intended route across several of those peaks of more than 1000 metres.

By the time we reached the first cliffline we all needed a break. The original route to



QUINTESSENTIAL QUEENSLAND

The Southern

Spicers Peak goes straight up the cliff but it's extremely exposed and has claimed the life of at least one bushwalker. We scrambled west for about 100 metres to a break in the cliffline, lugged our packs uphill to a second line of cliffs, then swung east again to rejoin the original route on the edge of an extremely exposed bluff. As I scouted ahead I disturbed a brush-tailed rock wallaby. Last time we had climbed this peak with only day

packs—the extra weight was already telling. The hot weather in Brisbane had convinced me to swap a few litres of water for the red wine and I had also thrown in a 30 metre rope to help with pack-hauling. A steep scramble through stately grass-trees led us to a band of rainforest on top of Spicers Peak at 1222 metres.

The wider panorama included Mts Barney and Ballow, then curved right towards the

Steamers. As we sat down for morning tea Barry reminded us that the holes in the ground were made by funnel web spiders—we headed south downhill after a quick snack.

Our route took us steeply down below the cliffs on the southern side of Spicers before we swerved east to avoid a nasty tangle of stinging trees. We crested the ridgeline and continued downhill to a saddle before head-



Main Range

ing up to the 1021 metre summit of an unnamed knoll. The route passed very close to the edge of a sheer cliff and the wind was building from strong to frightening. To the west, a dust storm threatened to ruin our clear, blue skies.

As Barry led us downhill he almost stepped on a huge, red-belly black snake that was sunning itself on the track. We hurried through a snaky patch of long grass in the saddle, suddenly very alert. We started climbing again and paused for lunch at a cliffline among a stand of hoop pines with clumps of crows-nest ferns clinging to their scaly trunks.

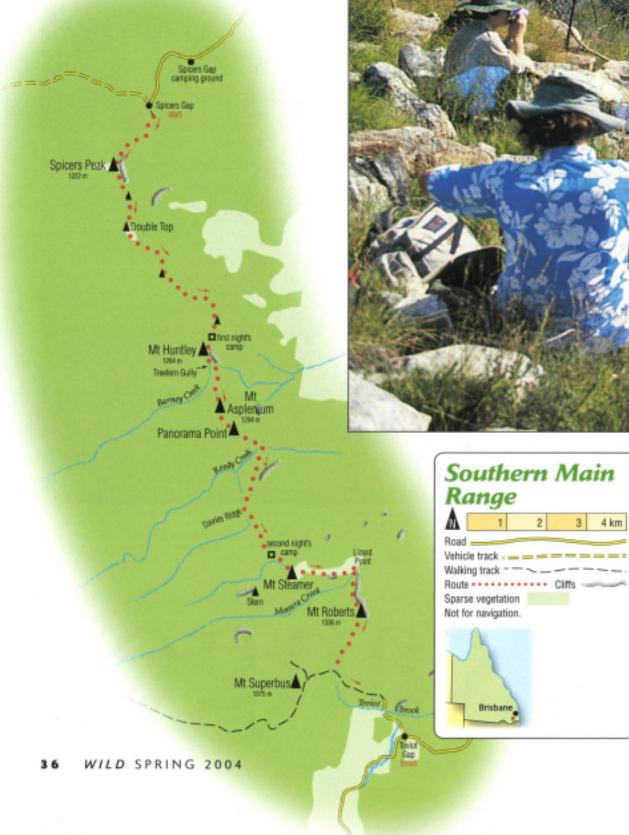
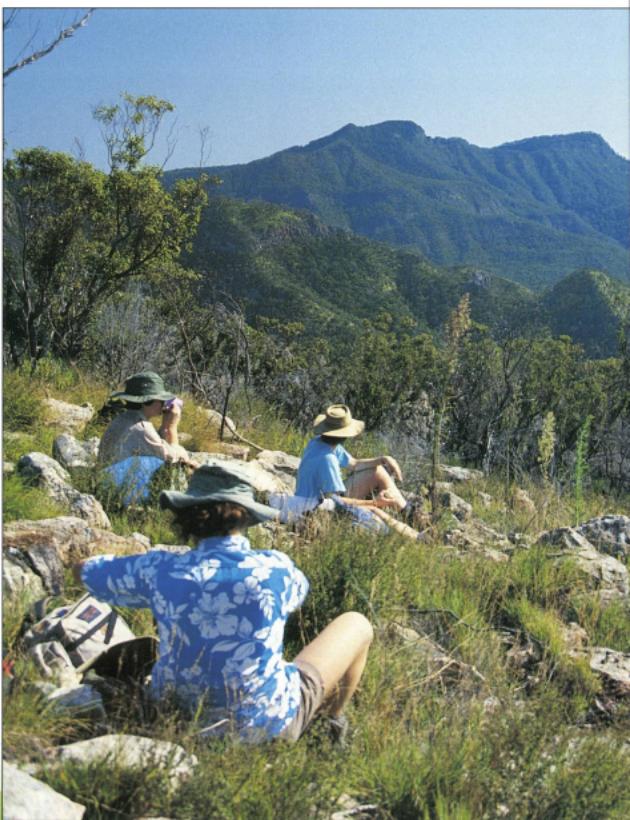
Refreshed after lunch, we zigzagged uphill, crossing grassy slopes and mossy boulders before reaching the 1150 metre summit of Double Top. We sped across the second knoll of Double Top, followed the cliff-edge precariously downhill to another grassy saddle, then scrambled uphill again to the 1008 metre summit of the next unnamed knoll. From here the hulking mass of Mt Huntley appeared across a seemingly bottomless void. Still in good spirits, we headed downhill on an open ridge towards the dark-green canopy of a patch of rainforest. After skirting round a tangle of vines we reached the Rainforest Razorback, an aptly named rocky ridge that bisects the abyss on the left from the sheer

drop on the right. By this stage we were concerned that we would not reach our intended camp-site on Mt Huntley, so I scrambled down to a natural shelf that is said to hold water following rain. Alas, not a drop was found.

We sipped frugally before following the ridge to the base of a grassy hill. We lugged our packs to a false summit, then trudged on to the 1067 metre crest of this open, grassy knob and followed a balding track

downhill to Huntley Saddle. It was 4.30 pm. After some discussion, we decided we should use our remaining water and scramble up to the camp-site on top of Mt Huntley. After all, there was permanent water on the opposite side of the mountain.

We finally agreed that there was not enough daylight nor energy left to attempt the steep climb up Mt Huntley. The last thing we wanted was to be caught on the



side of a cliff in fading light. So we pooled our water, made sure that we had 500 millilitres each for the climb in the morning, and ate a very dry dinner.

By 6 pm we were ready for bed and the variety and styles of camping gear soon became apparent. Lyn and I have always carried a tent, sleeping bags and Therm-a-Rests, as has Ros. I had walked with Geoff many times before and was not surprised when he laid out a groundsheet below his hutchie and pulled a lightweight sleeping-bag from his pack. Then I saw Barry's sleeping arrangements—a blue plastic sheet stretched out beside two charred grass-trees. He did say he was travelling light!

The wind abated soon after sunset and the only noise was the rustling of Barry's plastic cocoon. Geoff gave us a cooee at first light and we slipped out of our tents at 5 am as the first shards of sunlight appeared over the jagged peaks of Mt Barney. By 5.30 am we were zigzagging uphill through an avenue of majestic grass trees that would have been dancing in the breeze long before Captain Cook sailed up the coast.

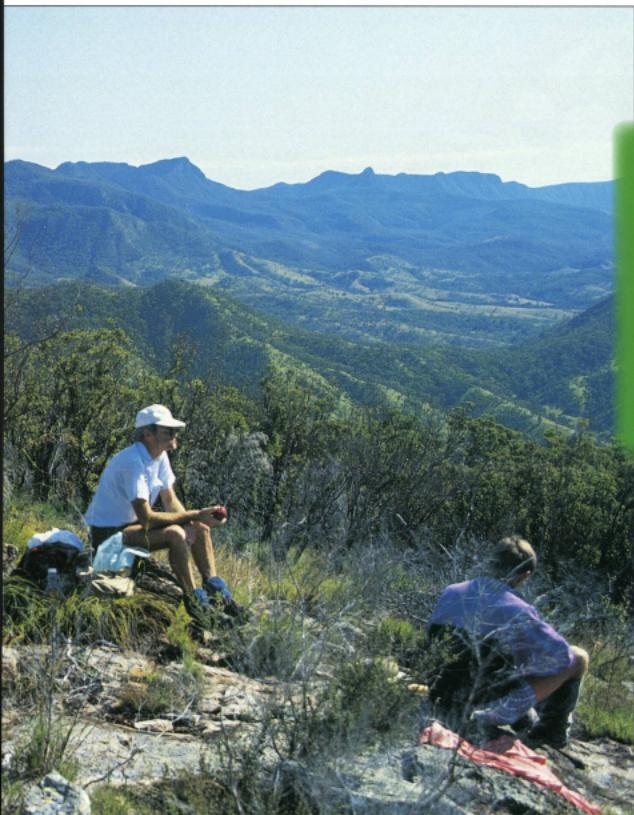
ledge with me in hot pursuit. Geoff followed closely behind Ros and before we knew it we were scrambling uphill again to the 1264 metre summit of Mt Huntley.

We knew the route to the water-point was south from the summit but the start was obscured. We followed a distinct footpath that led just west of south and ended at a rocky pinnacle. We agreed that we were too far south and were just about to head

minutes we hit a permanent creek in the beautiful Treefern Gully. It was time for breakfast!

We filled our water-bottles and contoured east again towards the ridgeline. After crossing two jagged fingers of rock, we reached a point where an extremely exposed, overhanging ledge provided great views of the surrounding terrain. We reached the cliffs below Mt Asplenium, contoured west to a break in the cliff, then scrambled diagonally uphill over mossy rocks towards the 1294 metre crest. Someone mentioned an early lunch and Geoff replied: 'Lunch? You've just had breakfast. Let's keep going.'

We shouldered our packs and headed downhill towards another knoll. From here the



An unusual view of the Main Range from near the summit of Mt Bangalore. Mt Huntley is just left of the middle. Mt Mitchell is the pinnacle on the right. Buchanan

We hit the cliffline and contoured along the base of the bluff to a break in the cliff just beyond the north-western corner. The view stretched across Spicers Peak to Mts Mitchell and Cordeaux and along the Rampsarts to Boars Head and Mt Castle (see *Wild* no 87). Barry scampered up a rocky chute and secured our rope to a sturdy tree. Lyn practised overcoming her natural fear of heights as she tiptoed across a narrow

back uphill when the rock Barry was standing on parted company with the end of the ridge. He managed to grab a spindly tree and stay on the ridgeline but his trekking pole speared downhill through long grass and was never seen again!

We headed back up the ridge towards the summit and swung east through a patch of tree ferns, about 200 metres south of the summit. After contouring eastwards for a few

track led west down a rocky chute to the head of a four metre cliff. I was last down the cliff and Geoff was directing my feet. My right foot was firmly planted on a toe-hold and my left was stretching down to the next. Geoff kept saying, 'A little further...keep going...only about ten centimetres to go.' I replied, 'Mate, I'm not a bloody ballet-dancer and my legs aren't as long as yours'. That's when I felt the tear, and it wasn't my tights. The heavy pack and the extended stretch were too much for a normally supple groin muscle but I wasn't feeling any pain yet!

We headed downhill across a grassy ridge, then climbed to the 1259 metre summit of Panorama Point. From here, fabulous 360° views take in the best of the Main Range. As we headed downhill, then up again to the 1119 metre crest of Lower Panorama Point, the wind was gusting. It was almost 2 pm when we found a sunny spot on the lee side of the ridge for lunch.

Refreshed, we headed off again towards Davies Ridge where the sighting of a huge, black snake had us tiptoeing through the long grass. After cresting Davies Ridge we ambled downhill to a grassy saddle, trudged over another unnamed peak at 1017 metres and ambled downhill to our camp-site in the Steamer Saddle. My groin strain was a bit troublesome so Geoff and Barry volunteered to scarper down to the water-point and refill our bottles.

That night the wind became gale force. Geoff suggested that Barry sleep under one

Then I saw Barry's sleeping arrangements—a blue plastic sheet stretched out beside two charred grass-trees. ▶



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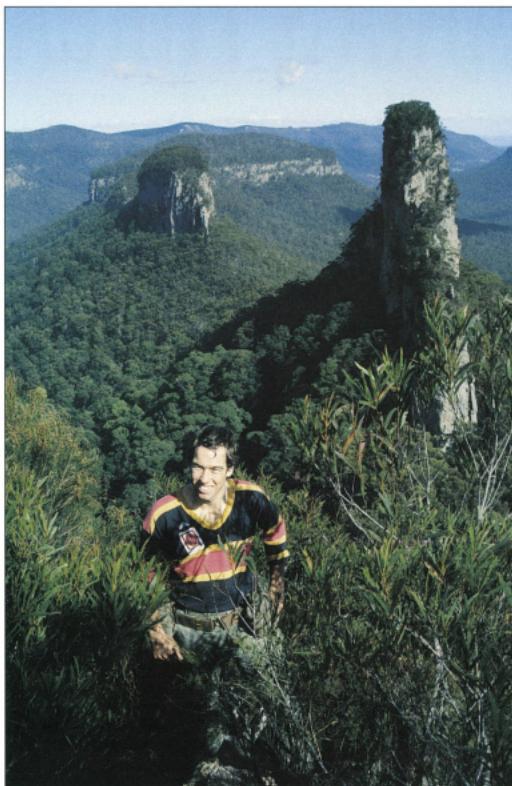
side of his hutchie but drew the line at sharing his sleeping bag. We were totally oblivious to Barry's shivering. Geoff called us again at 5 am. The temperature had plummeted to 6°C—cold by Queensland standards. Our camp-site was sheltered from the sun which didn't poke its head above the mountains till almost 6 am.

My groin was slowing me down as we trudged uphill across a grassy slope to a narrow ridge on top of Mt Steamer at 1218 metres. There was a great view across to Lizard Point and we could also see Mt Roberts and the huge hulk of Mt Superbus on the opposite side of the void that separates the two peaks. We decided against a side-trip to the Steamers and followed the main track to the top of a four metre cliff where we got the rope out. Barry and Geoff gave the women an impromptu lesson on how to loop the rope between their legs, flick it over their shoulder, and then descend without doing themselves an injury. I stayed behind to lower the packs. From the base of this cliff our route took us to the edge of another where we paused to enjoy the Main Range panorama.

The sight of another huge, black snake encouraged us to leave our sunny vantage point and we continued along the edge of the cliff, crested a 1250 metre summit, then headed downhill towards a bare, rocky slab on the end of Lizard Point. The northern panorama stretches across Mt Asplenium, Panorama Point, Mt Huntley, Spicers Peak, the top of Mt Mitchell, Mt Cordeaux and along The Ramparts to Boars Head and Mt Castle. A massive, wedge-tailed eagle soared 15 metres above us as we enjoyed morning tea in the sun. As we were about to leave a peregrine falcon flew past the edge of our rocky lair.

Our route now led us downhill through the Lizard South camp-site from where a rocky track zigzagged uphill and across another narrow razor-back ridge to a line of cliffs. By now the routine was familiar—contour west to a break in the cliff! We scrambled steeply uphill through a mass of spear lilies to a cairn on the 1336 metre summit of Mt Roberts. After enjoying the tranquillity of the never ending line of cliffs, valleys and peaks, the feeling was shattered by the haphazard appearance of pink tape lining a foot-pad to nowhere! I have long

held the belief that many good bushwalkers have honed their navigational skills using off-track routes marked with cairns and tape but in this wild, remote area of the World Heritage Listed Main Range, the tape certainly was an intrusion!



The Steamers—Mast, Funnel and Prow—provide a western access route to the Main Range from Emu Creek. Knight

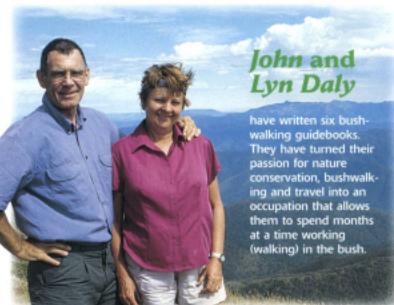
We ignored the foot-pad and found the correct route leading downhill to the southwest. A series of lazy zigzags led us down, again passing very close to the cliff-edge, to a point where there are great views along the southern bluffs of the Steamer Range. From here we could clearly make out the Prow, Funnel, Mast and Stern.

We scrambled downhill to another saddle before adopting the hands-and-knees approach to bypassing a mat-

ted tangle of liana vines. Just beyond, the rainforest trees were decked in gold- and olive-coloured mosses. After crossing another rainforest-covered ridge, we began to climb towards a sunny clearing and a track junction one kilometre from the 1375 metre summit of Mt Superbus—south-east Queensland's tallest peak. Fallen logs made this clearing a natural and popular choice for an early lunch.

Ros became a bit complacent after lunch. She tripped and fell, lodging herself and her pack between two mossy boulders. After much laughter, she abandoned her usual 'everyone has to be responsible for themselves' approach and accepted some help from Geoff. She was soon freed and from here on it was all downhill. There were three very steep sections of track to negotiate, interspersed with attractive stands of palms and tree ferns. The track to Superbus is popular with day walkers and there are no navigational difficulties. We followed the track to a corner post at the National Park boundary, then continued following the route of an early service road through an eroded gully. This gully gradually became a dirt road, crossed Teviot Brook and led us to Barry's car at Teviot Gap.

By the time we crammed into his car and headed back to Spicers Gap the toughness of the walk had already begun to diminish. The sprains no longer ached, the bruises stopped hurting, the scratches had stopped bleeding and we were already talking about our next jaunt. Funny people, bushwalkers! ☺



John and Lyn Daly

have written six bush-walking guidebooks. They have turned their passion for nature conservation, bushwalking and travel into an occupation that allows them to spend months at a time working (walking) in the bush.

TASMANIA'S THREATENED

What's at stake

Tasmania's forests are amongst the grandest in the world. When they are felled, then fire-bombed and then the native wildlife is poisoned, no fur, feather or flower survives. That ecosystem is extinct. In this savage age of commercial triumph such extinction is called 'ecologically sustainable' by logging magnates, premiers and prime ministers alike.

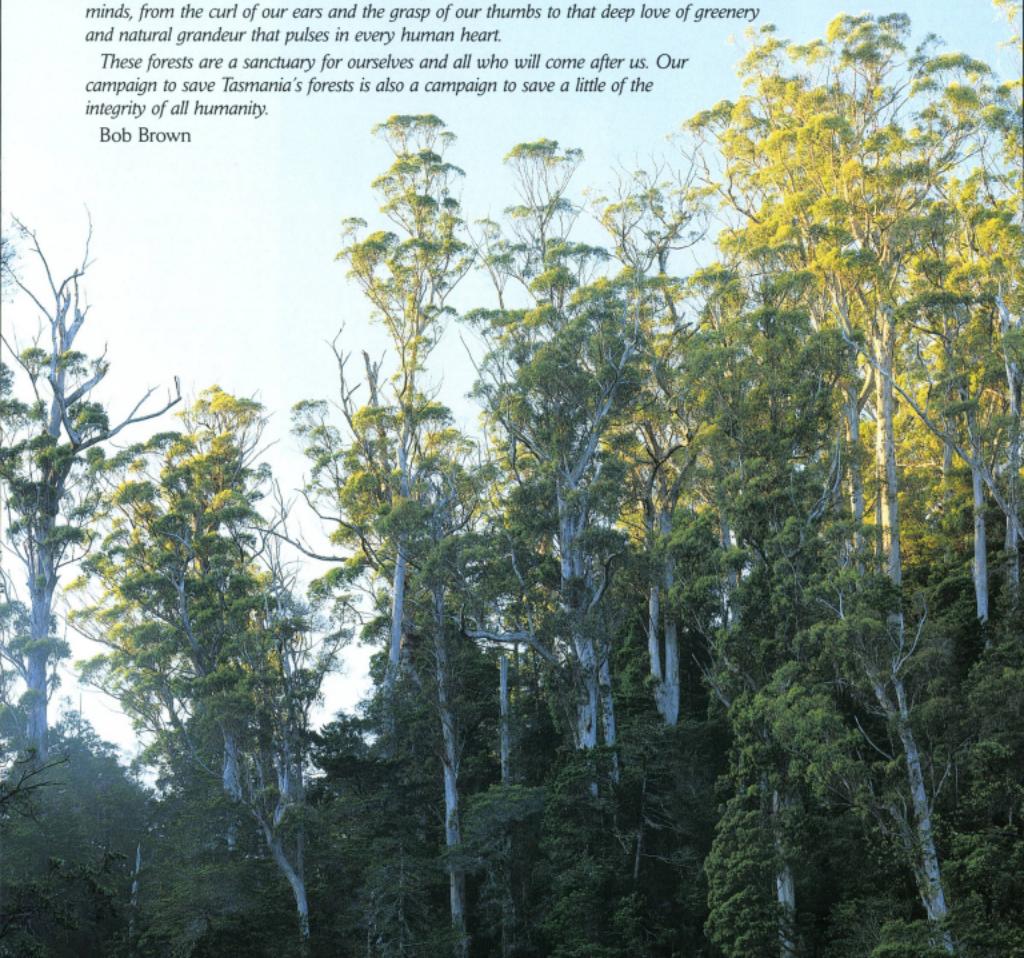
Against such malignant and destructive spin stand two powerful saviours: the will of the majority of the people, and the dynamic action of the few in the forests, on the streets, in the offices, printing houses and parliaments of Australia.

Wild's images give us dramatic and intricate glimpses of Tasmania's forests and are a call to action against the chain-saws. This year alone 150 000 log-truck loads of trees will be sent to the wood-chip mills.

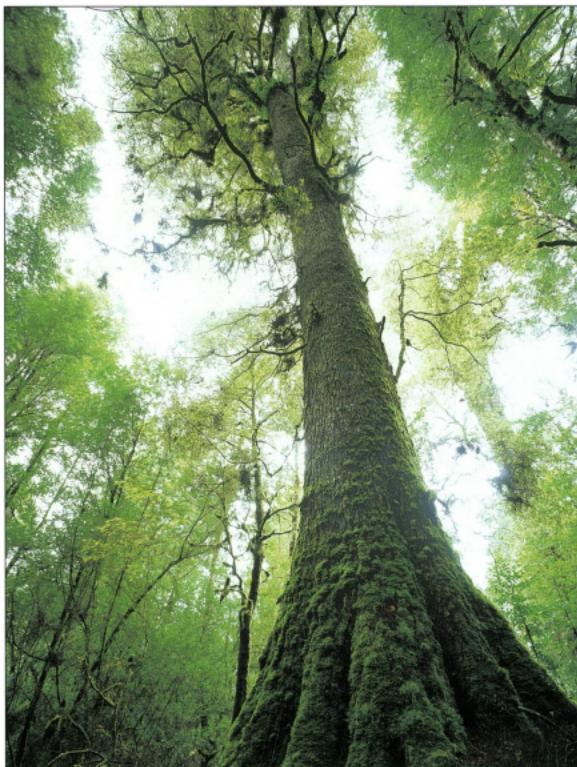
In wild forests is the essence of all human life. The forests moulded each of us, our bodies and minds, from the curl of our ears and the grasp of our thumbs to that deep love of greenery and natural grandeur that pulses in every human heart.

These forests are a sanctuary for ourselves and all who will come after us. Our campaign to save Tasmania's forests is also a campaign to save a little of the integrity of all humanity.

Bob Brown



OLD-GROWTH FORESTS



Above, giant myrtle tree in logging coupe FY055C in the 'Pipeline Corridor' of the Tarkine wilderness. **Left**, tall eucalypt forest above a rainforest understory, Rapid River, Tarkine wilderness. Rob Blakers



Brush-tailed possum at home in a tree hollow. Ted Mead

Rob Blakers has been living and photographing in Tasmania since he arrived from Canberra in 1980 for a three-week ski-mountaineering holiday. He finds the landscape sublime, and the trashing of its finest—especially the old-growth forests—grotesque and tragic beyond comprehension.



Ted Mead is a Hobart-based artist who has explored extensively throughout Australia. Commitment to the conservation of wild places has been the driving element behind much of his photography. Ted strongly believes that it is essentially the evocative image captured on film that motivates public support for the preservation of our remaining primitive world.





'After the loggers have called', Styx valley, Blakers

A Night on the Crown

Andrew Vilder lives it up at Pantoneys Crown, the Blue Mountains



The author's artist's-eye view of Pantoneys Crown. Andrew Vilder

WHERE SHOULD A BUSHWALKER FROM SYDNEY spend the longest, coldest night of the year? At a nightclub, a film, or snuggled up in bed reading *Wild* magazine? Guess again! It's time to grab a mate and go out on the Crown.

Views of 720° to distant horizons, rock scrambles, an almost full moon, the winter solstice, an alien landscape, amazing photography—I had promised all this to my walking partner Phil Newman. This was more than enough to entice the man far from his usual Kanangra haunts, north into the strange vastness of the Wollomi and west to the sweeping Bathurst Plains. There, respectively, lay the two stony mountains that would make this possible, the spectacular Pantoneys Crown (1022 metres) and its lesser known little brother, Evans Crown. To make things more interesting, we decided to climb both on the same weekend.

Two 360° views...equals 720!

What, in topographic terms, is a crown? In Australia there are thousands of named mounts,

hills, heads, domes, castles, peaks, spires, bosses, turrets, and even sugar loaves, but 'crowns' are rare. It seems a crown should have an exposed upper cliffline, preferably continuous, and a distinctly round or ovoid shape with a flat plateau-like top: the North American equivalent would be the buttes of Badlands, Arizona. Like a real crown, it should dominate its surroundings in regal fashion. Here the group similarity ends—this type of outcrop varies greatly in character.

Evans Crown, near the New South Wales village of Tarana, looks like a wooded hill with a couple of rocks poking out the top, hardly deserving of its imperial status. In fact, its European discoverer initially described it as a 'fine Sugar Loaf'. That was George Evans, who upon first sighting it in 1813 modestly named it after himself. Although over 900 metres above sea level, this crown is reached by a 20-minute stroll from a car park just 100 metres below. The surprise comes at the top, where massive, round granite boulders—some the size of buses—sit poised to cannon-ball one day

into the surrounding valley. They are known as 'tors' and heaven help anything in the way should these babies ever start moving.

Another crown—in all but name—is iconic Mt Solitary in Katoomba's Jamison Valley. Providing dramatic focus for the Nikons busily clicking at Echo Point, it is a moderate day- or overnight trip for the serious walker. The full traverse is 22 kilometres long by Wentworth Falls and, whilst panoramas from the top are scarce due to heavy vegetation, one will almost certainly spot a wedge-tailed eagle soaring over Lake Burragorang to the south.

The greatest crown in NSW is arguably the Castle, the awe-inspiring king of the Budawang peaks. Magnificent walk, magnificent view. It's hard to imagine the ancient flood which must have washed away the surroundings, leaving this harder 850 metre high basalt turret, which is so daunting to the walker that it was not climbed by Europeans until 1947.

Then there is Pantoneys. It can be seen from the highway to Mudgee, serene and

majestic, the centre-piece of the enormous, cliff-rimmed Capertee valley. It carries the name of William Pantoney, a member of the first European expedition through this area, led by John Blackman. Blackman had another, quite unremarkable crown named after him just behind Pearson's Lookout, ten kilometres to the west—where motorists stop to gaze in wonder at Pantoneys.

Like several other major canyons in the Blue Mountains, the Capertee is a 'box' where, in contrary fashion, the lower end tightens into a narrow pinch at the river exit. It contains numerous cattle farms and the ruins of Glen Davis oil-shale mining town at its lower end; from here the waters of the Capertee River begin their tortuous west-east crossing of the Great Dividing Range finally to emerge near Richmond. Champion bushwalkers Max Gentle and Gordon Smith passed this way in February 1931 *en route* from Capertee to Kurrajong. Gentle later described the intervening canyon country as 'puzzling in its make-up and hideous in its aspect'. This from a man accustomed to tough going!

Approximately north-south in orientation, Pantoneys Crown is one-and-a-half kilometres long and some 150 metres wide, with only

two known access points for punters without rope or climbing gear. It can be approached from the west by Coco Creek, an annual day walk led by Carol Lubbers of the Sydney Bushwalkers' Club that entails complicated navigation through a rabbit warren of foothills. The popular, easier way is from the south by Baal Bone Gap, 'back door' of the Capertee, then along a fire track which follows Crown Creek. From where a four-wheel drive can be parked this walk is about 14 kilometres return.

The stage was set for a solid weekend coronation, with Pantoneys the main event. ■

Walking during the two shortest days of the year did not bother us. We would use sunlight as a tool to get us safely on to the Crown and back the following day. After all, the long, long night in between was the reason for our trip; the brightly moonlit plateau was to be our nocturnal playground. The weather, the one unpredictable element in our equation that had the potential to ruin everything, remained cold and clear. It would be the perfect winter walk.

Using the well-worn southern approach, we rattled in our two-wheel drive car through Lidsdale and out along the track beside

Long Swamp, the true headwaters of the venerable Coxs River. Forced to stop by a scary-looking dip two kilometres south of Baal Bone, we hoisted our packs and continued on foot through Ben Bullen State Forest. The continuing assault on this plateau area on two levels—by long-wall coal mining underneath and *en masse* motorbike riding on top—has left many scars with neither activity likely to abate in the future.

We strode down through a typical Wollemi-style defile beneath beetling sandstone buttresses and frowning cliffs into an ancient landscape studded with pagodas and other strange formations. The scale and colour of the cliffs is astonishing, ranging from the most pristine white to brassy golden-orange. Plunging over Baal Bone Gap where a huge, locked gate excludes all vehicles, we entered Pantoneys Crown Nature Reserve and felt as though we were walking back through time into some kind of lost world.

Winding along the valley it soon became apparent what a botanical freak show the Wollemi is. For a start, arboreal cannibalism: eucalypt saplings sprout high in the branches of cypress pine trees; eucalypt saplings high in the branches of different eucalypts; whole gums killed by mistletoe infestation, thereby killing the mistletoe itself. Black cockatoos

■ Our Crown was a desert island, surrounded by air; the outside world might have ceased to exist. ■

Viewed from below Baal Bone Point, Pantoneys Crown stands proud and aloof from the surrounding country.
Simon Knight



seem to be the culprits for this, bombing seeds of foreign plants into the bark of others where they germinate and take root.

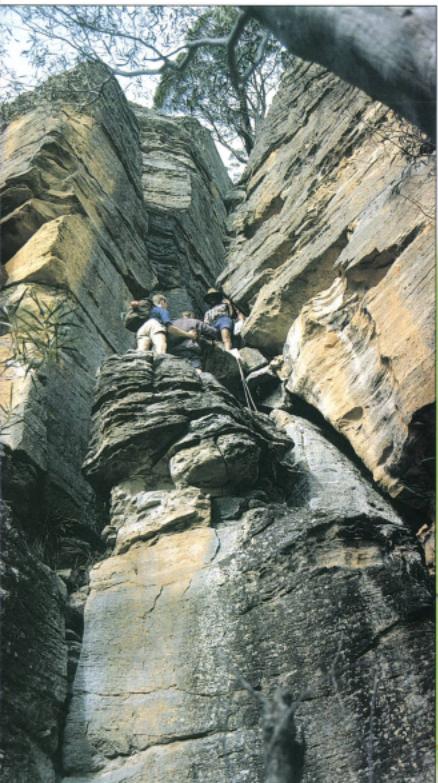
There were examples of another eye-catching tree which appeared singly here and there. It resembled a mature camphor laurel, but with dark grey bark and blue-green leaves. We didn't see any of those

us on top of the Crown's northern prow. We had excellent views of Mt Iris and Sentinel to the north-east, and the conical Tayan Peak was eminent in the distance.

We had approximately an hour before sundown to pitch our tents in a sheltered amphitheatre between several pagodas before setting off to explore the displays of wind-eroded sandstone across Pantoneys' summit. The imagination works overtime here: what would you like, a fat Buddha, an angel's wing, crouching lion, begging dog or a lunging shark? Phil's impression of 'a lunar landscape with trees' was appropriate, while it reminded me of an old, Victorian-age cemetery. Some of the stone wafers are thin enough to be translucent, cer-

With pictures taken, dinner eaten, and a chill southerly wind brewing, we had little else to do. So we retired to our tents and fell asleep by 8 pm—our 'big night out' was really spent snoring! I, for one, enjoyed the best sleep I'd had for months.

The chirping of birds woke me just in time to get my camera set up for the sunrise to the north east over Glen Davis. After a leisurely breakfast we packed and made another quick circuit of the plateau to confirm the absence of a visitor's book. We were curious about how many people come here—my guess would be several hundred each year. We meandered back down to



*This gully at the southern end of the Crown is trickier than the normal route of ascent at the northern end.
Knight*

other pines; however, there were prickly pears—yes, cacti—growing on some ridges tops.

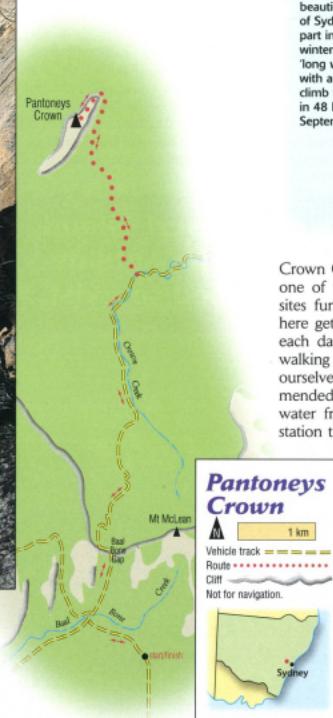
A vagary of Capertee and Wollomi walking is that it's better to follow gullies than ridges as there are too many false ridges that lead nowhere. Rapid progress can be made along the dry, limestone creek-beds, over smooth grass flats with a few casuarinas. We reluctantly left the comfort of our chosen gully to grind up the loose slopes below Pantoneys cliffline; however, a couple of short climbs and rucksack hoists soon had

tainly the most delicate I have seen. The earth rings hollow, emitting a dry 'clang' under walker's boot. Our Crown was a desert island, surrounded by air; the outside world might have ceased to exist. At least its worries could not bother us here...

At a quarter to four a small, very faint moon slipped over the eastern horizon so quickly that we didn't immediately notice it. Our cameras were focused on the sunset unfolding in the opposite direction: it was simple, swift and beautiful.

Andrew Vilder

is privileged to live, work and walk in the beautiful Blue Mountains. An active member of Sydney Bushwalkers' Club, he is taking part in the club's current winter programme of 'long walks' culminating with an attempt to climb the Three Peaks in 48 hours in September.



Crown Creek, stopping for morning tea at one of the several pleasant, grassy campsites further along the road. Some places here get only an hour or so of direct sun each day in winter and we were already walking in deep shadows. Having hauled ourselves back up Baal Bone (not recommended for summer), we replenished our water from the pipeline-pressure-reducing station there—surely the cows in the valley wouldn't miss a couple of litres.

A welcome change of clothes awaited us back at the car, followed by a 35 kilometre drive past Lake Lyell for the planned nip up Evans Crown. By 3.30 pm we were on its summit, reflecting on the difference between the crown's terrain. Granite opposed to sandstone; round, smooth rocks instead of jagged ledges. Damp, mossy vegetation in rich, black soil whereas on Pantoneys it is hard to find a drop of water.

For such a little hump, the view from Evans is astonishing. We would have liked to stay for what promised to be another picturesque sunset but we were out of film and out of time.

There was opportunity for a relaxing break at Lithgow on the way home—Crown Lager of course—as we looked back on a rare and very scenic weekend of walking.

The following week a quick phone call to David Noble of National Parks & Wildlife Service helped to identify the laurel-type trees as a species of kurrajong native to the Capertee area.

PROPHET OF LOSS

Quentin Chester catches up with Tim Flannery



Flannery with local assistants above Mosak, Ila Valley, Papua New Guinea. All photos Alexandra Szalay

ON A BREEZY AUTUMN EVENING PROFESSOR Timothy Fridtjof Flannery takes to the stage of the Senior Citizens Club in Mannum, a drowsy Murray River town an hour's drive from Adelaide. An audience of 40 or so has gathered to hear about the demise of a very different Australia—an ancient land populated by giant wombats and emus, huge goannas and odd, short-faced kangaroos.

It is a saga that Flannery has recounted many times before. Yet, in this unlikely venue, with its crocheted rugs, piano in the corner and Australiana tea towels pinned to the timber panelling, he still manages to give the story freshness and vitality. With animated gestures he brings a menagerie of prehistoric creatures to life. It's a fascinating story told with great gusto. Even the oldies in the audience seem impressed.

However, behind the jovial demeanour is a man with a disarming message. For the

punch-line to the tale is that Australia's long-lost megafauna was not a victim of mysterious or impersonal forces. Instead these animals were hunted into oblivion by this continent's earliest settlers. In contrast to the

to this day. To put it bluntly: you and I have blood on our hands.

If you think of Australian popular culture as an ecosystem, then Tim Flannery is one of its most exotic creatures. And, just as early scientists struggled to make sense of platypus specimens, so the modern-day taxonomists of public life struggled to find the right labels to pin on Flannery. In official parlance he is a palaeontologist, mammalogist and now museum director. But if you follow the hubbub of media commentary you will also hear him variously branded as an eco-pessimist, folk hero, media darling, pot stirrer and real-life Indiana Jones.

What can be safely said is that over the past decade he has published 14 books, fronted his own television series, has had countless media appearances and has given public lectures. His works include *The Future Eaters*, a ground-breaking ecological history

This scenario portrays Australia circa 46 000 years ago as a kind of killing field.

sanitised view of Australia as a castaway Eden where quirky wildlife always lived in precious harmony with its human inhabitants, his scenario portrays Australia *circa* 46 000 years ago as a kind of killing field. And according to Flannery this sorry narrative of species loss is by no means a closed chapter. In many different ways the plundering of the continent and its wildlife continues

of Australia and its near neighbours. He dished out a similar treatment on North America in *The Eternal Frontier*. His most recent book, *Beautiful Lies*, tackles the subject of population and the environment in Australia. Other books include a series of exhumations of early Australian historical accounts such as *Watkin Tench 1788* and, most recently, *The Life and Adventures of William Buckley*. In recent times he has done more to stir up interest in the history and prehistory of this continent than any other individual.

However, Flannery is much more than another quirky populariser of science.

He is also a man on a mission. He has pitched his ideas into some of the fiercest debates currently doing the rounds—everything from species preservation and population policy to resource development and wilderness management. Not content merely to raise the profile of his pet subjects, he has shown a willingness to deploy them in his one-man campaign to change the way we look at this country.

By fixing his gaze on the stark facts of extinction and habitat loss Flannery brings into question many of our cosy assumptions about the natural world. So, for example, although many like to regard Australia as a land of riches and abundance, he sees a largely impoverished continent with a human population living on borrowed time. While others rejoice in places pristine, far from the madding crowd, he brings into question the very thing many Wild readers have spent the past two decades ardently celebrating and defending. 'I don't think there is any such thing as wilderness in Australia,' he says.

Flannery is also a man in a hurry. I had hoped to ask him a few questions after his talk in Mannum but even before I could get up from my chair he was off and gone. When I finally caught up with him a few weeks later he was still on the run, bounding up the stairs to his den-like office in the South Australian Museum. He bustled in, shook hands, loosened his tie and flung open the office window as if hungry for air.

Face to face, Flannery is the same affable figure that strides the public stage. While his arguments are backed by formidable scholarship, he is the antithesis of the diffident, fence-sitting scientist. Talking on his favourite themes he gushes with boyish enthusiasm, spiking his sentences with words like amazing, incredible and fantastic. At the same time, just below the surface cheer there is a steely, combative edge to his view of the world. It's clear that he is rankled by many of the changes inflicted on Australia in the name of progress.

This mix of natural curiosity and spirited opinion was evident from the start. Flannery grew up in the Melbourne bayside suburb of Sandringham. In the 1960s there were still areas of heathland and tea-tree thicket

close by and he remembers a childhood building tree houses and collecting frogs at the local swamp. As the years passed, however, he was dismayed to see these same areas cleared for housing. Even more disturbing was the desecration of the beach nearby where locals tipped car bodies, rubbish and old fridges over the red bluff cliffs. 'Looking back, I think it was a very brutal, ignorant and nasty society in many ways. It was bulldozing natural Australia for its own gain,' he says. 'I think a lot of my conservation ethic stems from those times.'

'During this period I was also catching up with the kind of relationships that an all-boys school leaves in deficit,' he says with a smile. 'I fell in love with a girl from Wimbleton in western Victoria—the only problem was she didn't care much for me. Nevertheless, on freezing winter afternoons he would ride his motor bike down the Geelong road, find he was unwelcome, and just keep riding.'

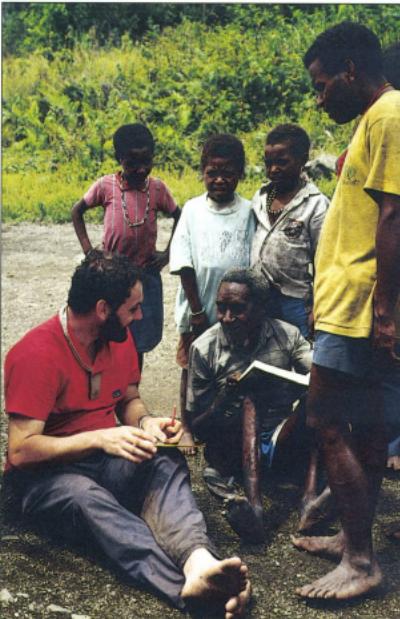
The real love affair that bloomed was with the basalt landscapes of Victoria's Western District. He spent countless weekends camping out in lava tubes and exploring the lakes and viaduct caves around Hamilton and Portland. There he stumbled across fossils, skeletons and Aboriginal artefacts. He also befriended landholders, including natural historian Lionel Elmore, an influential mentor. 'It's just some of the most amazing country in Australia,' says Flannery. 'There is this heavy European overlay but you don't have to dig very deep to find this fantastic evidence from the past.'

The world of fossils and dinosaurs had always been an obsession. At the museum he met geologist Rob Glenie, who had maps of Cape Paterson detailing where Victoria's only dinosaur fossil had been found. Glenie, Flannery and his cousin John visited the site and to their astonishment, within minutes of arriving, they found another dinosaur bone. It was a seminal moment: 'Suddenly a whole world was opening up to me—here I was just an hour's drive from Melbourne, finding all these fossils.'

After completing his masters his focus became palaeontology, with research into the evolution of kangaroos leading to a doctorate in zoology in 1984. Given his hands-on approach it was inevitable that Flannery's interest in mammals would propel him into the field. For 18 years he carried out surveys in the wilds of Papua New Guinea and on the islands of the southwest Pacific. As documented in his book *Throwin' Way Leg*, it was the stuff of extreme adventure, venturing

deep into the highlands, battling all manner of trials and tribulations from exotic diseases and hostile wildlife to the raw and often violent realities of tribal life. Along the way he made many significant discoveries, the proudest of which was a large black-and-white tree kangaroo, known as dingiso. This work culminated in two pioneering handbooks: *Mammals of New Guinea* and *Mammals of the South West Pacific and Moluccan Islands*.

As if this wasn't enough Flannery then embarked on an even greater challenge, a book that would confront head-on the questions about Australia's evolution that had bewildered him for many years. 'For me, writing *The Future Eaters* was an adventure. I was working through problems as I wrote it,' says Flannery. This sense of personal exploration gives the story the vigour needed



Flannery with interested local onlookers,
Arafak Mountains, west Papua.

His outspokenness created difficulties during his student days at St Bede's College in Mentone. 'I didn't like school much at all,' he confesses. Although interested in science he was poor at maths and, faced with limited options, he ended up studying English and history at university. Flannery has no regrets about the years spent on his arts degree. 'The things I encountered there I've carried with me—they've really enriched my life.'

Under the terms of his scholarship he was supposed to become a high-school teacher but during his final year he realised that he wasn't cut out for the classroom. At this time he was already doing volunteer work cleaning fossils at the Museum of Victoria. Through connections there he decided his next step was to enrol in a masters programme in geology at Monash University.

to carry the reader through the breadth of material he uses to support his arguments. The book has been hugely popular and highly contentious, most notably for its conjecture about humanity's rampaging role in shaping our environment.

At the heart of this thesis is the downfall of Australia's giant marsupials. Based on a dating of sites where articulated megafauna skeletons have been found, Flannery and colleagues now argue that this occurred close to 46 000 years ago. While some in the scientific community believe more work is needed to give definitive answers on the timing of megafauna disappearance, the real controversy is about what—or who—caused the extinctions. The Flannery line is that the megafauna was wiped out by a hunting spree of the first people to make their way on to the continent. While many factors suggest this possibility, finding direct scientific evidence—the smoking gun—is much harder. By Flannery's own admission this 'blitzkrieg' model relies on the extinctions occurring close to the dates for first human habitation. So what if it can be proven that people arrived much earlier? What if there was an overlap of 10 000 or 20 000 years in which humans and megafauna coexisted? 'Well, if they prove to be the dates, then I'm wrong,' says Flannery.

This matter-of-fact admission raises a thorny issue. Even allowing for the usual academic bickering, it's clear that Flannery is out on a long limb. In presenting his ideas as science, you have to wonder how the public at large would respond if his theory came unstuck. While some critics have lashed Flannery for portraying ancestral Aborigines as 'burning down the biological furniture', others worry that the force of his argument overshadows the extraordinary richness of Aboriginal culture and their success over many thousands of years as environmental managers, itself a point that is made in *The Future Eaters*.

If Flannery is fazed by these assaults, he's doing a great job of hiding it. But the aim of his provocation goes deeper than a feisty debate about the past. '*The Future Eaters* is really just an attempt to understand the stage that the play is played on', he says. Beyond this is a larger concern—to highlight the hazards all Australians face as they consider what their country will be like in ten, 50 or 100 years from now. And for Flannery we are not just bit players in the drama of preserving our biodiversity. The real point is that people have always been—and always will be—centre stage in shaping the fate of the continent.

According to this reading of events, the popular mythology of wilderness areas unsullied by humankind has a hollow ring. 'What we have here is an artefact of at least 40 000 years of human management', says Flannery. 'So what people call wilderness is actually a very new and unstable ecosystem that's losing diversity rapidly.' He cites sev-

eral factors driving this decline including the combined effects of what Europeans are doing and what Aborigines have stopped doing. It's an ecosystem that has had the keystone species—the most efficient consumer of vegetation—pulled out of it.'

Here he's talking about fire, the kind of micro-fire management that was practised throughout Australia for tens of thousands of years. In its place we now have catastrophic wild fires that put biodiversity at risk. Take Royal National Park for example. Over the past 20 years it has lost the koalas, the grey kangaroos, the platypus and the greater glider. By using species diversity as a yardstick, many of those areas cherished as 'wilderness' might have outward appeal to

age earthy and accessible to a wide audience. For all his breadth of scholarship he is, above all else, a gifted storyteller.

In his 2002 Australia Day address he linked ecological ideas to a much wider discussion about Australia's cultural life and history. For him the way forward is based on a very different land ethic, one that recognises our interdependence with the continent:

...Australia—the land, its climate and creatures and plants—is the only thing that we all, uniquely, share in common. It is at once our inheritance, our sustenance, and the only force ubiquitous and powerful enough to craft a truly Australian people. It ought to—and one day will—define us as a people like no other.

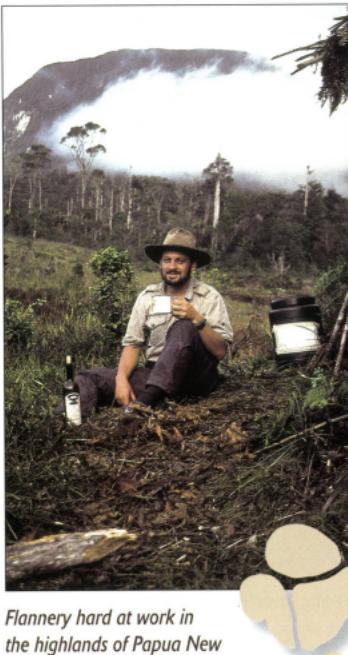
Flannery acknowledges that this new sense of belonging is taking time to develop. It is a process of learning and co-evolving that will be slow and uncertain. At a fundamental level he urges people to make their own journey. 'Just get out there and don't simply walk through the bush but really look at the place and ask basic questions like "Why is this particular plant here?" and just try to get a sense of the geology of the place—that's what did it for me,' he says.

Direct contact with the natural world continues to be a potent source of inspiration. Though he retains a strong attachment to Victoria's Western District he now feels most at home in the sandstone country encircling Sydney. 'Despite the fact that it has got this city built there, these areas are still remote, rich and undisturbed habitats', says Flannery. A shack on the Hawkesbury River is his favourite escape, a secluded base where he can write and put ideas about sustainability into practice. 'It's my place for downtime', he says.

Somehow it's hard to imagine this restless ideas man slouching by the river for long. His personal schedule is unrelenting. During our conversation he seemed on edge, often checking his watch or springing up to answer phone calls. On top of his work as a writer and scientist he is deeply involved in his role as Director of the

South Australian Museum where one of his main aims is to re-energise museum-based research. 'I've always had five-year plans', he says 'and this appointment was a chance to give something back'. I was curious to know more but my time was up. He leaped from the sofa, said a cheerful goodbye and headed for the stairs. In a flash he was gone. It doesn't matter whether you're talking about 46 000 years or the next five minutes, when you're Tim Flannery there isn't a second to lose.

Quentin Chester has been a contributor since *Wild* no 3; he lives to walk and writes to live. qchester@senet.com.au



Flannery hard at work in the highlands of Papua New Guinea.

jaded urbanites but are fast becoming biological ghost towns—what he calls the 'elite emptiness'. According to Flannery, all Australian ecosystems need some degree of management, yet, as he freely admits, how we should provide this management is a big question.

One thing is obvious; he is not pinning his hopes on governments or academia to generate a solution. In delivering his pungent warnings about biodiversity loss and sustainability, he is also making a plea for the hearts and minds of all Australians. And unlike some commentators from the grim-reaper school of environmentalism, Flannery has developed a knack for making his mess-

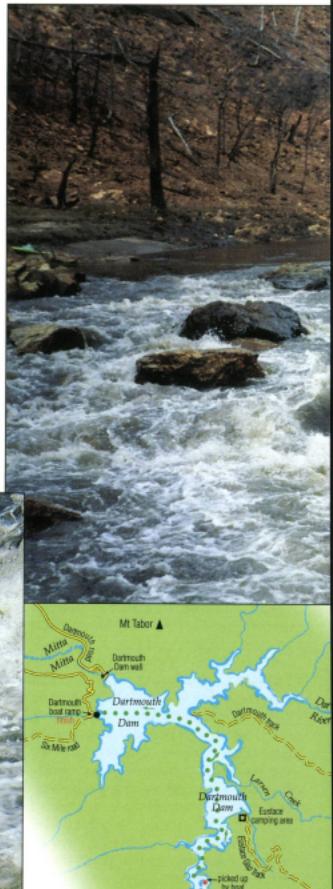
Rapid REVIVAL

The Mitta Mitta River's most famous rapids were flooded 20 years ago, but Alison Boyes was recently able to paddle them again...

The best rapids are probably a set of three just after the junction with the Gibbo River... The first is a solid grade-4... On four trips I only ran it once and swam. The second... I broke my first kayak in it... I did not try it on subsequent trips. At the time it seemed like

of the Dart, Gibbo and Mitta Mitta Rivers were flooded as the dam filled. The heart of the Mitta Mitta was submerged under 40 metres of water.

Over the summer of 2002–03 fires raged in the north-east of Victoria, the continuing



Adrian Dyer enjoying a 'reborn' Mitta Mitta River. Paul Sorrentino

a grade-4 or -5. The third... maybe a grade-4 I swum on my first two trips.

Joel Shelton

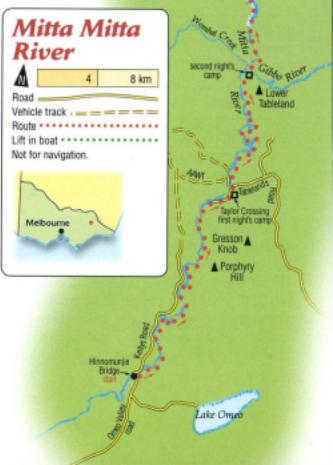
SHELTON FIRST KAYAKED THE MITTA MITTA River as a schoolboy in 1968. The kayaks were made of fibreglass and the Mitta Mitta River was known as one of Australia's wildest white-water canoeing rivers. Back then the river ran unimpeded from Victoria's highest mountain, Mt Bogong, through the Victorian High Country. The rapids stretched for 80 kilometres from Glen Valley to the township of Mitta Mitta. The jewel in the Mitta Mitta's crown was a series of three rapids below the junction with the Gibbo River. But a change was in the air. (See 'Requiem for a River' by Shelton in *Wild* no 5.)

In 1979 Australia's highest dam, the Dartmouth Dam, was completed. Large sections

drought etched deeper into the landscape and the waters of Dartmouth Dam flooded into the Murray River system. An idea was forming—would the dam drop low enough for the legendary, submerged rapids to re-emerge? As the long summer stretched into a dry autumn the dam dropped to its lowest level ever, 30 per cent capacity. A trip down the Mitta Mitta's 'Gibbo' rapids looked possible. Now all we needed to be able to paddle the river was some rain.

Ferocious storms coated the Victorian Alps in snow in late July and the river began to pump—it was time to round up the crew and head for the mountains.

The historical Hinnomunjie Bridge near Omeo disappeared behind us looking a little distressed from the recent fires. We were finally on the Mitta Mitta River and floating downstream towards a section of the river that





Paul Sorrentino showing the bottom of his boat as he exits a large hole. Alison Boyes

had not been paddled for over 20 years. There were five of us, Walter, Paul, Adrian, Bill and me. The best adventure trips have enough planning, equipment and good company, while still allowing for variations and surprises. This looked like being one of them. The river was swollen from the heavy falls of snow and rain and was full of sediment and ash washed from the fire-damaged areas upstream. The banks were covered in burnt trees, ash and the occasional green shoot. It was an unusual landscape to paddle through and it became more bizarre as the days progressed.

A few hours of easy paddling on swiftly flowing, icy, grade-2 water brought us to our first night's campsite at Taylor Crossing. A well-constructed walking bridge crosses the Mitta Mitta River here as part of the famous Australian Alps Walking Track and there are good camp-sites complete with pit toilets and stacked dry wood. As I struggled out of my kayak I sank down to my knees in silt and ash. The increased sediment in the river had settled along the bank, creating seemingly bottomless, silt-laden embankments. As always, it was a great feeling to get out of wet gear and seek warmth in front of a camp-fire.

It is interesting to see what people decide to pack in the limited space of a white-water kayak. Bill hadn't done any kayak camping before and had shown us his sleeping-bag the night before we started paddling. Adrian threw it up in the air and it took

about ten minutes to float down—great for a summer night in Queensland but not so good for the Mitta Mitta River in winter! We managed to scrounge more gear to keep him a bit warmer. Walter had had to choose between long, warm pants and a bottle of medicinal port. The port obviously won, but it took a few nips before he was convinced that his choice had been the right one. Adrian had decided that he couldn't fit in

The easy paddling continued with grade-2 rapids in swift, icy water. A large stag leaped into the river sending a huge spray of water into the air. Bill must have been inspired by the stag's bravery as he capsized twice in quick succession, swimming in the freezing water each time. We stopped for lunch at the confluence with the Gibbo River. The main rapids were tantalisingly close but Bill wasn't looking too good. He was shivering and having difficulty speaking words other than 'more chocolate please'. There was nothing for it but to start a fire, warm him up and camp for the night.

The early finish to the day gave us a chance to survey the scenery. It was a truly bizarre vista. The nearby hills were covered with snow and burnt trees. The deep river valley had been scoured of vegetation and soil for 40 metres above the river's present level and boating signs could be seen way above our heads. Long-dead trees drowned by the dam bore signs of the recent fires. There is something ironic about trees which have been submerged for 20 years being burnt just after they reappear. Years at the bottom of the dam had covered the rocks with sediment metres thick which had begun to crack in places from exposure. We had never seen anything like this before in Australia; it was like paddling along a 'moonscape' river.

Day three, and finally the long-anticipated rapids. We found the first of the three main rapids a couple of hundred metres downstream

‘The rapid was threatening to draw the boat back for a good thrashing.’

any shoes so was stuck with only his cold paddling booties for the duration of the trip—the trade-off was a good supply of chocolate.

On the second day we had to crack the ice off our paddling gear before we were able to slip it over warmish bodies. Never the best part of a paddling trip but definitely worse in the middle of winter. I think we were all a little surprised by how cold it was but the snow lying on the nearby hills provided an ample explanation.

As we departed we met some local fishermen who told us that it is possible to get a small boat up to here and see the bridge when the dam is full.

from our camp. The rumble in the air as we approached announced that the river was getting more aggressive. We discussed the best line from the rocks overlooking the grade-3 rapid. Bill decided that after his experiences the day before, his line was to take the photographs. The rest of us agreed that the right-hand line looked the better option. Paul, also known as Crash-test Dummy for his habit of going first down unknown rapids, set off to take the acclaim. However, as he paddled towards the top of the rapid it was obvious that he had changed his mind and was heading for the 'hero' line down the middle of the rapid, containing cross-currents and a number of large holes. As Paul's kayak plunged down the main drop the kayak's tail was sucked under and the front shot up vertically. The rapid was threatening to draw the boat back for a good thrashing but Paul somehow managed to heave the kayak out and finish the rapid in good form. The rest of us decided to navigate the tighter and more technical right-hand line where the water was less powerful, and paddled down without incident.

From the first rapid the river flowed gently between steep valley walls lined with long-dead trees first ravaged by water and then by fire. A further 100 metres downstream the second rapid could be heard. An inspection from the river bank revealed a 60 metre long, grade-4 rapid that contained five drops. We stood for some time looking at the second drop, which was about two metres high and had a dangerous stopper that could hold a boat indefinitely. The first drop was only a short distance above and there would be little opportunity to correct the line before the second drop. After much discussion even Crash-test Dummy agreed that running the second drop wasn't a good idea with kayaks full of gear. We put in after the second drop for a rewarding run down the rest of the rapid.

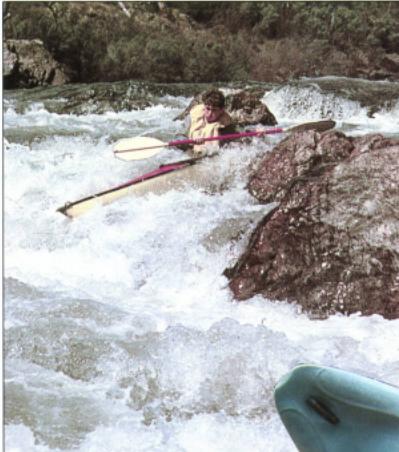
Finally we reached the last of the three main rapids. It was a fun, bouncy ride down an easy grade-3 rapid. After the last drop the river slowed. We had hit the waters of Dartmouth Dam.

The fun was over and now the slog began. The river had ended sooner than we had hoped. We were over 20 kilometres from our destination at Dartmouth's boat ramp. The plan was to paddle up the dam and camp at Eustace camping area. We had hoped to be picked up from there but the dump of snow had closed the access road. Instead, we would have to paddle across the dam to Dartmouth the next day if the weather was favourable.

We were not looking forward to this bit of the trip. Our kayaks were designed for white-water touring, not for speed over flat water. A strong, cold head-wind was blowing. The valley was extremely steep and full

of dead trees and we would be lucky to find a vaguely flat spot for lunch. There certainly weren't going to be any camping spots before Eustace, a few hours' paddling away. There was nothing for it but to put our heads down and paddle.

We hadn't travelled far when we hit the sludge. It was made up of burnt logs, charcoal and organic matter washed down by the river and blown together by the wind. It was about 15 centimetres thick and stretched for hundreds of metres. Paddling through it was a bit like paddling through porridge. The



Paddling the now-submerged section of the Mitta Mitta in December 1968, before the river was dammed. Andrew Speirs

best option was to follow someone else. Adrian offered large amounts of money to anyone who would Eskimo roll in it but no one took up his offer.

The kayaks began to spread out. Each person found an individual paddling rhythm, manoeuvring through the maze of dead trees and trying to avoid the head wind. We regrouped at Italian Point and pushed on after a very quick lunch break. No one was keen to stop for too long as we were all feeling cold and knew we had a couple more hours of paddling before camp. Bill shot off in his faster boat, Paul and I weren't too far behind but Walter and Adrian quickly fell behind in their shorter, slower boats.

Bill, Paul and I huddled in the lee of a headland waiting for Adrian and Walter to catch up. We consulted our map of the dam, trying to will ourselves closer to the camp. Paul observed that we should soon be able to see a distinctive island that was marked on the map. I pointed out that the island was in fact the headland we were sheltering next to, 60 metres above our heads.

It was then that we saw a vessel heading along the dam. We had seen a couple of other boats but they hadn't slowed down or taken any interest in us. This vessel was slowing down! Walter and Adrian's faces appeared from the deck, the bow was lowered and we paddled up on to a water-quality testing boat. The Rural Water Commission was giving us a ride all the way to Dartmouth—we couldn't believe our luck.

Within an hour we were standing at Dartmouth boat ramp in dry clothes as feeling slowly returned to our hands and feet. We

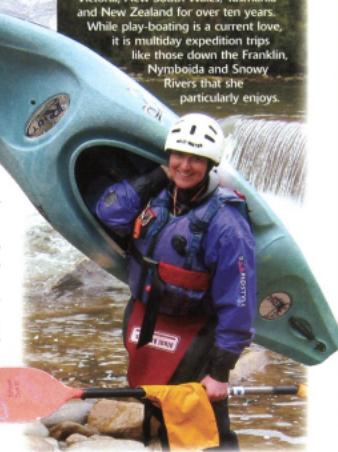
had expected to have a day-and-a-half of hard paddling to do—and suddenly the trip was over. There was an element of anticlimax but we were looking forward to a meal at the pub and a warm bed at the motel.

We also had an opportunity to reflect on the trip. During the planning we'd spoken to many people who had paddled the river before it was flooded and we'd relied on their memories of the 'Gibbo' rapids. Other memorable rapids lie under the dam's regulating pond or were blasted away and will never be paddled again. Shelton probably sum-

Alison Boyes

has been paddling white water in Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania and New Zealand for over ten years.

While play-boating is a current love, it is multiday expedition trips like those down the Franklin, Nymboida and Snowy Rivers that she particularly enjoys.



med up their views when he said: 'I prefer to remember that stretch of the river as it was...I really could never bring myself to do it...too many happy memories...too many rapids lost.' We had managed to run rapids that had probably not been paddled for 20 years and may not be seen again in our lifetimes. But it was no longer the same Mitta Mitta River or the same 'wild' experience that Shelton had in 1968.

Many people in Dartmouth and Omeo assisted us with this trip and we thank them for their country hospitality.



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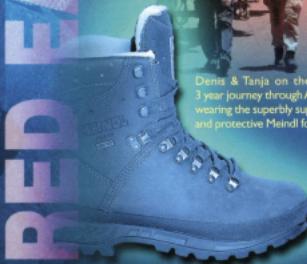


Tanja Hofman, partner of Denis Katzer standing with one of the camels that accompanied them on this extraordinary expedition through Australia.

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The Cobungra and

**Victorian Alps valley
walking at its best,
by Glenn van der Knijff**

FIRST FREQUENTED AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH century by local cattlemen, the upper reaches of the Cobungra River and Swindlers Creek are a long-forgotten walking area situated below the southern edge of the Bogong High Plains. There are no roads or four-wheel drive tracks through either of the upper valleys and the only track (the decaying remains of Dungeys Track) is seldom used. But for something a bit different, a walk down an alpine valley has rewards not often experienced in the Australian Alps where most high-country walking traverses spurs, snow plains and summits.

This moderate two-day walk starts high on the slopes of Mt Hotham but soon dives into the upper reaches of the Cobungra River. The sweeping views of the tops are replaced with the more confined scenery of the tranquil Cobungra and Swindlers valleys. The open valleys provide pleasant walking with stunning views of the burnt ridges above; in places, the ghostly skeletons of burnt alpine ash giants stand out prominently against the dark regrowth. Devastated by the 2003 bushfires, the recovery of the alpine environment has been painfully slow in some areas yet amazingly fast in others. A few areas, such as the night's camp-site at the Cobungra-Swindlers junction, have remained surprisingly unscathed.

When to go

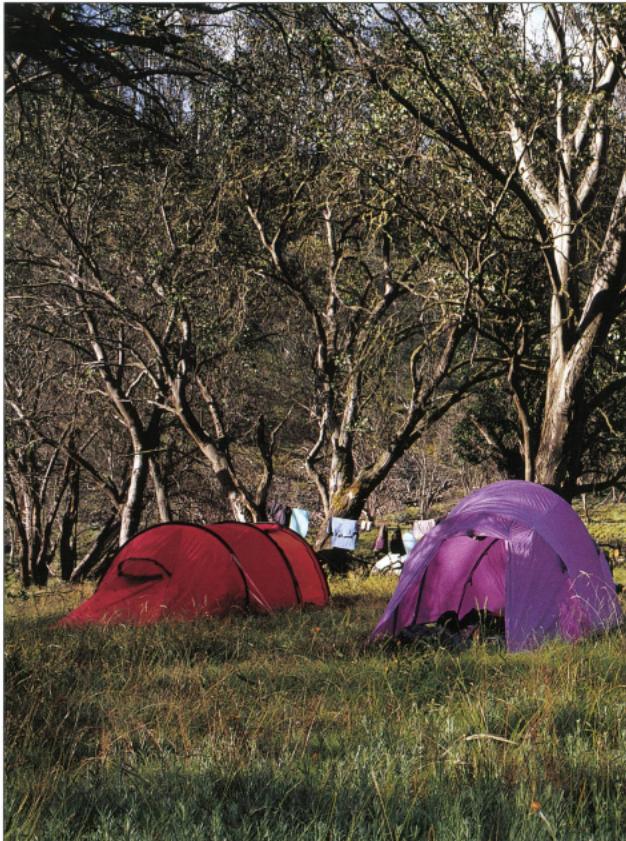
The warmer months, from late spring through April, are best for walking as snow blankets most of this area during winter. The weather is generally warm and long, fine days are common although you should always be prepared for the cold conditions that can develop quickly. Wild flowers grow in profusion during summer.

Warnings

Nearly all the area was severely burnt in the bushfires of January–February 2003 and regrowth is encouraging but slow. To help to prevent erosion and not destroy fragile regrowth, avoid walking on damaged soils. Take special care when crossing the Cobungra River or Swindlers Creek after heavy rainfall; in flood the rivers may be difficult and dangerous to cross. Some of the route between Dibbins Hut and Swindlers Creek, along the route of Dungeys Track, can be hard to follow, so you'll need to use your navigational skills.

Access

The small mountain village of Harrietville (330 kilometres from Melbourne) is the closest settlement to the start of the walk. It can



Hard times in camp at the junction of Swindlers Creek and the Cobungra River. Glenn van der Knijff

be reached by following the Hume Freeway from Melbourne, then taking the Great Alpine Road through Bright to the upper Ovens Valley. The road continues beyond Harrietville to Mt Hotham, about 30 kilometres away. The Mt Loch car park is on the north side of the road on a bare, windswept ridge about one kilometre before the ski village. This is the start of the walk. However, you need to leave one car about seven-and-a-half kilometres down the road where the Brandy Creek fire track joins the Great Alpine Road, east of Mt Hotham. This junction (GR 5167E, 59038N on the *Dargo Plains–Cobungra* map) is not obvious but the fire track leaves the north side of the road about two kilometres before it reaches

Swindlers valleys



the Mt Hotham resort entrance station (closed in summer) at an area known as Mother Johnsons.

The walk

From the Mt Loch car park follow a fire track, which forms the Australian Alps Walking Track (AAWT), north-east. There are fantastic views all around as you pass through a broad saddle before climbing to the top of Marys Slide. You'll notice a memorial to Charles Derrick, a ski racer who perished here in 1965. He'd been attempting to ski from Mt Bogong to Mt Hotham in one day and was tantalisingly close to his final destination when he was overcome by hypothermia.

Beyond this area of groomed ski slopes, the track heads through the shallow Derrick Col and climbs in an arc over the broad southern shoulder of Mt Loch. On the exposed tops, the fire track

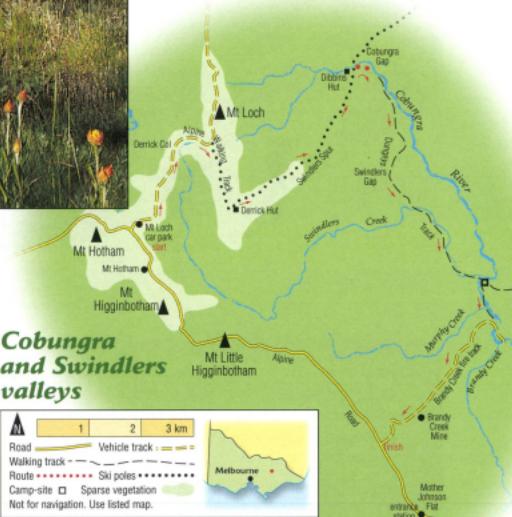
veers north away from the AAWT. This is a good point at which to make the easy side-trip to Mt Loch, 600 metres away. The odd summit area, almost encircled by basalt outcrops, makes a great viewing point from where all the major peaks of the Bogong High Plains can be seen. Drifts of alpine everlasting add a pleasant foreground to the mountains and valleys beyond.

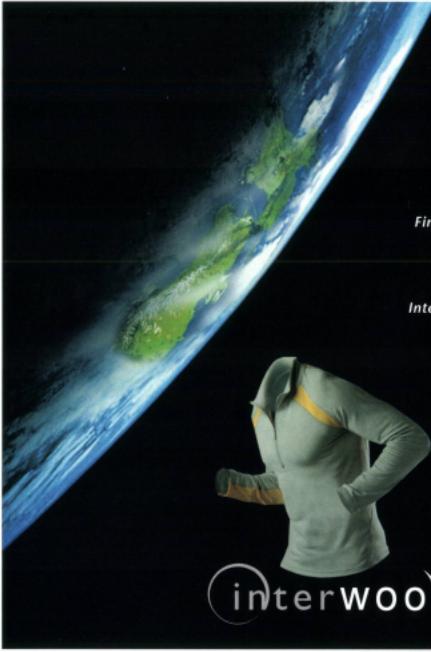
Back on the AAWT, continue south along a good foot track and within one-and-a-half kilometres you will arrive at Derrick Hut near the tree line at the head of Swindlers Spur. The hut provides day shelter only but is a good spot for a rest on a cold day. Snow gums near the hut were burnt by the 2003 bushfires but somehow the hut survived.

Continue walking north-east as the track passes through some small snow plains and scorched snow gums along the crest of the spur. Wild flowers are thriving in a few places after the bushfires. In particular, pink trigger plants seem to have been given a new lease on life and grow in profusion along Swindlers Spur.

You'll notice that the *Bogong Alpine Area* map shows the Quintet Mine Huts to the west of the track, about one-and-a-half kilometres north of Derrick Hut, but these huts were destroyed by the bushfires. In any case, the access route to the huts is not easy to find.

Near the northern end of Swindlers Spur the route begins to drop steeply and through the open forest you will espay the open





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Cobungra River valley some 300 metres below your feet. The track eases as you approach the valley, bursting out of the forest only a few hundred metres from Dibbins Hut, idyllically situated near the gurgling Cobungra River. The hut there today was built in 1987 to replace an ageing version from 1917. The previous hut was nicknamed the 'Creep Inn', as the low doorway meant you had to duck as you passed through. Today's doorway is little better!

Dibbins Hut was spared by the 2003 bushfires, with considerable help from helicopter water bombing. It is interesting to note just how close the fire came, with burnt grasses and forest just metres from the hut.

There are many camping opportunities between Dibbins Hut and the suggested camp-site, so you can make your own mind up where to stop. The area around Dibbins Hut is a pleasant option but makes for a longer second day. You will most likely reach Dibbins Hut at about lunchtime.

The AAWT heads east from the hut and soon reaches a footbridge over the Cobungra River. Do not cross the bridge but instead stay on the south side of the river and walk over the valley grasses to where the valley swings to the south-east. You will probably find a faint track, the remnants of Dungeys Track, heading down the valley. In its heyday Dungeys Track was used by cattlemen, and by the local police as they tracked cattle thieves. The track gave access through the high country between the towns of Bright and Omeo and was named after one of its frequent users, Detective Dungey. The track in the Cobungra-Swindlers area is rather overgrown today.

Try to stay on the track as it keeps to the south side of the river. After passing through a dilapidated fence the track crosses a small stream, then begins to climb away from the river to the south. The track can be difficult to follow, particularly when you reach the top of a minor spur, but it continues generally in a southerly direction as it drops into a prominent valley north of Swindlers Gap. (The section of track is often used by horse-riding parties, so keep your eye open for dung to help guide your way.) The valley is open and grassy and you'll find that the track climbs steadily from the small creek to reach the forested Swindlers Gap. At the Gap, through the burnt foliage, you can see some pretty, grassy flats below you on the banks of Swindlers Creek that make pleasant camp-sites. The track, more prominent now, descends to cross the creek. From here you can walk upstream for a few hundred metres to reach the grassy camp-sites.

Cross the creek and climb up above the river on the southern side from where you should find the track sidling about 20 metres above the river. After a further one-and-a-half kilometres the track crosses the river, then crosses it again a little further on before swinging prominently east and entering a broad, open valley. The Cobungra River joins Swindlers Creek a short while

later, forming a therapeutic, bubbling spa at the junction (although it's best appreciated on a hot day). Cross the two watercourses just above the junction to reach the splendid camp-site amid black Sallys and groves of alpine everlasting. There's a fine river pool here for swimming.

Day two

As the day's walking is not long enjoy a sleep in and don't bother leaving camp too

the walk AT A GLANCE

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Grade | Moderate |
| Length | Two days |
| Type | Mountain scenery and open valley |
| Region | Victorian Alps |
| Nearest town | Harrietville |
| Start, finish | Mt Loch car park, junction of Brandy Creek fire track and the Great Alpine Road |
| Maps | Bogong Alpine Area and Dargo Plains-Cobungra 1:50 000, Vicmap Outdoor Leisure Series |
| Best time | Late spring, summer and autumn |
| Special point | Area severely burnt in 2003 bushfires |

early. Dungeys Track heads south and stays on the east bank briefly before crossing to the west side 500 metres from the campsite. The valley opens out again into a lightly forested plain on the far side. You'd almost expect to find the ruin of a homestead here as the grassy valley looks like manicured pastures from an era long forgotten. Cross Murphy Creek and you will soon reach an area that was extensively bulldozed many years ago. The Brandy Creek fire track (closed to vehicles) can also be found here.

Follow the fire track steeply, generally south-west, on to the crest of a spur, leaving the valley behind. Stay on the track as it climbs higher, the grade eventually easing as you pass the remnants of the Brandy Creek Mine. Obey the warning signs: the old mine workings can be dangerous—there isn't much to see here anyway. The track climbs beyond the mine workings and you soon reach the end of the walk at the grassy parking area, just off the Great Alpine Road. This short day ends a fine walk.

Glenn van der Knijff grew up in the Victorian Alps where he developed an insatiable interest in mountain recreation, particularly cross-country skiing and bushwalking. He's skied in Canada and the USA but his most memorable activity recently was a trekking trip to Nepal, which culminated in an ascent of Mera Peak (6461 metres).

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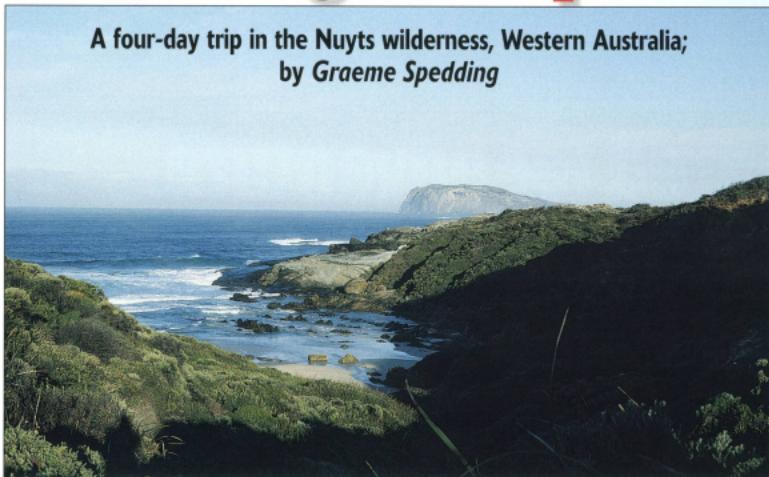
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Walking Walpole

A four-day trip in the Nuyts wilderness, Western Australia;
by Graeme Spedding



Little Long Point Beach and the creek of the same name are a welcome sight. Both photos by the author

THIS VERY PLEASANT AREA OF COASTAL HEATH ABOUT 18 KILOMETRES west of Walpole and about 500 kilometres south of Perth is dotted with perennial springs, many in sandy gullies, and provides the walker with an interesting mix of coastal walking, navigation through scrub, and some amazing stands of karri and tingle trees. Depending on the route taken, there is off-track navigation, some easy track walking and some fine, though tricky, beach walking and cliff scrambling.

When to go

The area is at its best in the spring but as most watercourses are perennial, trips can be attempted all year round. It does get very hot, even in March, and is very crowded at Easter, which is best avoided. The area is exposed to the worst of the winter storms and can be lashed by rough weather at any time; stories of people hiding under rucksacks to avoid the hail are not unknown. Lovers of wild flowers should note that spring is the best time for orchids.

Safety

The area has abundant tiger snakes and other smaller venomous snakes so gaiters (armour plated) are essential to protect you from bites and the thick, spiky scrub that is typical of the area. Prescribed burns take place in spring—contact the Department of Conservation & Land Management (CALM) office in Walpole to see what it has planned. I had my camp-site set ablaze a few years ago, after the advertised burning period, so be warned.

Maps

The CALM map *Deep River 1:50 000* (Sheet 2228-3) has the Bibbulmun Track and some of the old Nuyts four-wheel drive tracks marked on it, as well as the spurious fishing track described in the text.

More useful but harder to find maps are the 1:25 000 *North-east Saddle Island* and *North-west Saddle Island* maps. These maps show the old four-wheel drive tracks in detail—it's a good challenge to try to find them! (Both the maps and the tracks.)

Permits

None required. The ranger can be phoned on (08) 9840 1027 to get information on conditions in the park.

Access

The Nuyts Wilderness Block is 500 kilometres south of Perth. The walk starts from Mandalay Beach which is clearly signposted at Crystal Springs, about 10 kilometres west of Walpole. The walk ends at the track head on Tinglewood Drive. Please drive slowly and carefully past the private residence on approach to the park.

The walk

Allow half an hour for the car shuttle between Mandalay Beach and the track head. From the car park at Mandalay Beach, follow the Bibbulmun Track south on to the beach and head east. Some nice views are to be had out to Chatham Island, a nature reserve with two or three resident seal colonies. After about 20 minutes of walking a headland will loom above you. You have a choice: the adventurous can continue to follow the coast (but check the tides before you leave) whilst people wanting less navigation hassles and a different view can pick up the Bibbulmun Track (I call it the Bubblegum Track because of the prevalence of school trips) and follow it through the coastal heath. If you are pressed for time, uncertain of the tides or do not like scrambling around limestone rocks, stick with the track.

The track follows an undulating and sandy route through the heath with good views out to sea—great for the whale migration



Nuyts wilderness

Road — Vehicle track —
Walking track — Route •••••
Alternative route ••••• **Cliff** **Camp-site** □ **Not for navigation. Use listed maps.**



season—but it can be a little tedious. Those who follow the beach will have easier walking most of the time and may have a chance to get water from the small creeks that emerge from the dunes, but don't rely on this.

Either way, you will get glimpses of Little Long Point jutting out into the ocean after approximately two hours of walking. There is a sheltered camp-site in a peppermint grove behind the dunes here, minutes from a very reliable creek that empties on to the beach. If you approach along the coast, cross over the rocks of Little Long Point (be careful in wet weather) and follow the obvious creek from the beach back into the dunes. Pick up the track to the camp-site from here. The major headland of Long Point is the next thing you bump into if you miss the creek. Attempts to climb up into the heath before Little Long Point will only result in cuts, scratches, tears, wasted time and effort. A Perth Bushwalkers' Club member I met after coming this way described himself as a little stiff—I thought that 'bloodied from hip to shoulder' would have been a more apt description.

If you follow the Bibbulmun Track it will eventually lead you to a hut with a toilet, a water tank and some very poor tent-sites. The better camp-site (described above) is over the dune to the south-west of the hut, so follow the Bibbulmun Track east until it crosses an old four-wheel-drive track (mapped) and turn south-west (towards the coast) on this track for 500 metres down to the camp-site. A nice afternoon can be had exploring the rocks around the headlands and watching the sunset.

Day two

Knowledge of the tides may again help to decide how you tackle today's walking. There is a choice of routes depending upon how adventurous you are, although I would urge parties at least to try some navigation and route finding today as this provides rewards in terms of time saved (if you get it right) and some great views, as well as the satisfaction of having avoided the Bibbulmun Track. You may also want to carry four litres of water as the water at Lost Beach (your second night's camp) is brackish though reliable. If you approach from the top of the dunes you may not want to walk down to the creek and drag a lot of water uphill!

Choice one: Bibbulmun Track. Follow the four-wheel drive track uphill until you pick up the track (look for markers after about one kilometre) and turn in an easterly direction. Follow this to the top of the dune above Hush Hush Beach and stop to savour the views. Choice two's route meets the Bibbulmun Track here.

Choice two: walk from the camp out on to the beach and follow it along until you reach its southern corner. Follow a foot-pad over rocks into a small car park. Pick up a mapped four-wheel drive track

east-north-east and follow this track east towards Hush Hush Beach. The large hill on your right is a dieback control area—keep clear.

The soft, black sand road will deliver you into a car park looking along Hush Hush Beach—a spot great for morning tea. The beach has a very surfable break although only for the experienced and brave as sharks are not uncommon along this coastline. Drinking-water can sometimes be found by digging in the corner of the beach above the tide line.

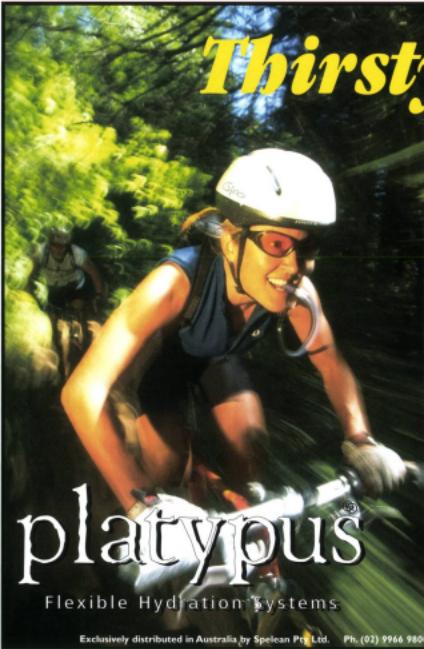
Now get out the tide charts. Again, you have two options: you can follow the beach, which seems the easier option, or you can head for the Bibbulmun Track.

If the beach has been eroded by storms or the tide comes in you may have to do some steep scrambling over loose and broken limestone and round headlands, and may also have to find a route through the scrub above the water. There is no way up to the sand-dunes above the beach; this should not be attempted. Parties have been pinned to the dunes here and caution is required, as is a good look out for king waves. Lost Beach is next to the headland of Point Nuyts. Collect water from the north-east corner of the beach or one of the many soaks that empty on to it. This beach comes and goes with the storms and you may have anything from a nice, sandy beach to none at all. To find your way up to the camp-site follow the rocks of the headland for about 100 metres until you find a track going up and little left to the top of the dunes. Follow this until you pick up the track to the Lost Beach camp and the cooking rock.

The alternative entails a little exploration of the steep dune just behind and below the car park. There is an old, somewhat ill-defined track here that leads up to the top of the dune where it becomes more distinct and eventually bumps into the Bibbulmun Track: choice one's route. When you have finished the climb, have a rest, savour the views and, in the right season, do some whale watching.

Follow the Bibbulmun Track, heading east-south-east, for about one-and-a-half kilometres until it rounds to the north and heads inland, GR 655228 approximately. There is a prominent grove of peppermint trees from where you can now look to the east and gain a view of the evening's camp-site. There is a large rock slab on a bearing of about 130°—this is the cooking rock and the camp is below it. It is about two kilometres away as the crow flies but will take about an hour to walk, and you may wish to put on your long pants. Pick your way across the scrub as best you can, taking the line of least resistance and keeping out of the gullies. In shorts you will get scratched—rather a lot—and will inevitably see (or stand on) a snake or two, so get out the armour-plated gaiters.

On the other side of this crossing there is a narrow but well-defined sand track heading west-south-west down to the coast. Follow



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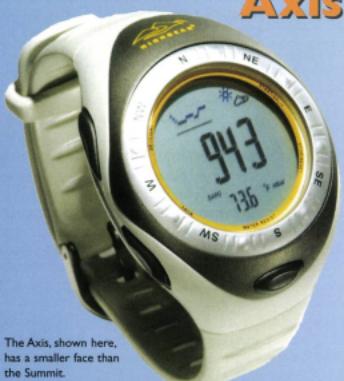
There are three models in the Watt pack range:

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MegaWatt: 2.0 L fluid, 7.6 L cargo capacity.

TeraWatt: 3.0 L fluid, 18.3 L cargo capacity.

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The Axis, shown here, has a smaller face than the Summit.



The Summit showing the different display modes.

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- Weather forecast
- Barometer pressure updated every minute

Compass

- Digital compass
- Resolution 1 degree with 16 direction pointers
- Leveling bubble for increased accuracy
- Adjustable declination
- Displays bearing in degrees and cardinal points

- User option for single- or continuous reading
- Temperature

- Digital thermometer
- 0.1 degree resolution
- Working range from -4F (-20C) to 158F (70C)
- User option for Celsius or Fahrenheit

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(see listing in classifieds)

this toward the coast for a short distance and you will stumble into the camp-site in a small but pleasant peppermint grove. This camp does not get the traffic that it used to but is still a pleasant site. The views from the cooking rock across to Chatham Island and out to sea are magnificent. In the burning season the smoke and the ocean haze mix to create some magnificent sunsets and quite surreal views.

Follow an ill-defined track down to the beach to collect water from the creeks. The

can be quite determined so take repellent and be prepared to share your dinner and ingest some extra protein. The camps also gets occasional visits from the locals—possums and other wildlife—which will devour any food not locked in your pack or tent.

Day four

A trip up Mt Hopkins is recommended and well worth it for the great views—take your



Unusually damp conditions underfoot on the main track to Thompsons Cove.

track is found by heading south-west down-hill, and then west—you will find the track eventually as there is no other way down, the scrub is just too thick. Collect enough water for the night and the next morning as you will not want to do this trip twice.

Day three

Follow the track generally east-north-east from the camp-site as it meanders inland and then runs parallel to the coast. It is a little overgrown in places but your feet will find little resistance—this is another old four-wheel drive fishing track.

At the track junction turn south-east towards the coast and follow this track down to the Thompson Cove camp-site. This is a beautiful spot next to a bubbling creek in a grove of peppermint trees. The creek comes out of the sand in the dune at the head of the gully and the water is truly the nectar of the gods. To keep it like this please toilet outside the gully—walk up the main track to the top of the gully and head to the west of Thompson Cove. To wash-up please go down to the coast by following the track beside the creek. Enjoy a swim, a rest, or take a short walk over to Aldridge Cove, west of Thompson Cove.

If this camp-site is full (it can only take a maximum of three to four tents) walk up towards Mt Hopkins and camp above a similar gully halfway up to the peak, or walk across to Aldridge Cove and camp there. All of these alternatives have good water so you will not be at a dry camp. Depending on the season the mosquitoes and March flies

lunch. Retrace your steps out of Thompson Cove gully and walk north-west (away from the coast) on the track you followed the previous day. It loops round the top of the sand gully and there is a signposted track to Mt Hopkins. Leave your packs here. Please do not ascend the east side of Thompson Cove as this is closed for regeneration after years of erosion caused by foot traffic.

The bush up to and around Mt Hopkins has been badly damaged by fire and is scratchy. Be prepared as it can be windy at the summit and the weather can change quickly.

Plunging down off the northerly side of Mt Hopkins is not recommended or condemned by the land manager. The summit has views of the caves above Aldridge Cove—the more intrepid may wish to visit them. You will need a boiler suit, torch and helmet and must be prepared to burrow under the worst of the scrub below the caves. You can then have a competition to see who has most ticks.

The walk out is approximately two hours. Return to your packs and walk out on the main track which will eventually pick up the Bibbulmun Track. Cross the footbridge over the Deep River and sign out of the park at the register on the north side of the crossing.

The South Coast Café is recommended for great coffee. If you are camping at a caravan park I would choose Coalmine Beach.

Graeme Spedding began bushwalking in WA at the age of 14. He has walked in WA, the Northern Territory, Tasmania and New Zealand as well as the UK and South-East Asia. Graeme began working as an outdoors instructor in 1987 and has introduced hundreds of school students to walking and climbing in Australia, and mountaineering in New Zealand. He is also a licensed private pilot.



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STOVES

The heat is on, by John Chapman

Wild Gear Surveys: what they are and what they're not

The purpose of *Wild* Gear Surveys is to assist readers in purchasing specialist outdoors equipment of the quality and with the features most appropriate for their needs; and to save them time and money in the process.

The cost of 'objective' and meaningful testing is beyond the means not only of *Wild*, but of the Australian outdoors industry in general and we are not aware of such testing being regularly carried out by an outdoors magazine anywhere in the world. Similarly, given the number of products involved, field testing is beyond the means of Australia's outdoors industry. *Wild* Gear Surveys summarise information, collate and present it in a convenient and readily comparable form, with guidelines and advice to assist in the process of wise equipment selection.

Surveyors are selected for their knowledge of the subject and their impartiality. Surveys are checked and verified by an independent referee, and reviewed by *Wild*'s editorial staff. Surveys are based on the items' availability and specifications at the time of the relevant issue's production; ranges and specifications may change later. Before publication each manufacturer/distributor is sent a summary of the surveyor's findings regarding the specifications of their products for verification.

Some aspects of surveys, such as the assessment of value and features—and especially the inclusion/exclusion of certain products—entail a degree of subjective judgement on the part of the surveyor, the referee and *Wild*, space being a key consideration.

'Value' is based primarily upon price relative to features and quality. A product with more elaborate or specialised features may be rated more highly by someone whose main concern is not price.

An important criterion for inclusion is 'wide availability'. To qualify, a product must usually be stocked by a number of specialist outdoors shops in the central business districts of the major Australian cities. With the recent proliferation of brands and models, and the constant ebb and flow of their availability, 'wide availability' is becoming an increasingly difficult concept to pin down.

Despite these efforts to achieve accuracy, impartiality, comprehensiveness and usefulness, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and for the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.



The essential brew: on a camping platform, Eastern Arthur Range, Tasmania.
Grant Dixon

IN MOST WALKING AREAS CAMP-FIRES WERE replaced by fuel stoves many years ago. Stoves have become important pieces of walking equipment; almost every outdoors person has a stove and many have several, illustrating that there is no 'best' stove for all situations. Fuel type is the most important factor to consider when deciding on a stove—fuels are described below from easiest to hardest to use, in that order.

Gas stoves

These are simple: they have a burner head controlled by a valve and the gas canister is attached by a screw thread or clips. They are easy to use, very quick to start up and adjust to a simmer, and easy to maintain. However, at low temperatures the gas does not vapourise well, making burning inefficient—at very low temperatures the stove might not even burn at all. Some special gas mixes are available that work better at low temperatures but these are more

expensive and not always readily available. While the stove unit is light, it is not possible to carry an exact amount of fuel and most people carry spare fuel canisters thus making these stoves heavier than the total weights may indicate. However, for short overnight trips it is possible to use tiny 100 or 113 gram gas canisters, reducing weight but increasing the price and environmental impact.

Alcohol stoves (methylated spirits)

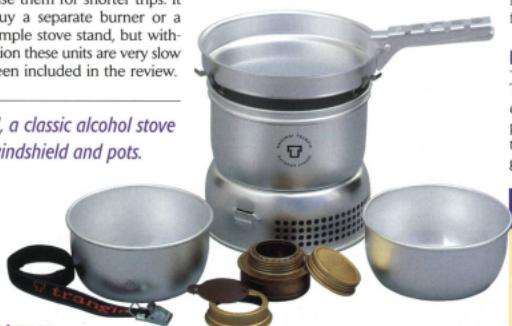
These stoves are relatively easy to use and maintenance free. A burner cup holds the fuel—just pour in the alcohol and light it. Alcohol gives the lowest heat output so stoves of this type will take a lot longer to cook on and use almost twice as much fuel. Flame protection is critical and most popular kits come complete with windshields and pots. Even so, they perform



*Campingaz Twister 270
HPZ.*

poorly in windy conditions. In cold temperatures the burner can be hard to light; however, this can be prevented by warming it in your sleeping-bag or jacket before use (inside a plastic bag). Beginners and travellers commonly use these stoves; some experienced walkers use them for shorter trips. It is possible to buy a separate burner or a burner with a simple stove stand, but without wind protection these units are very slow and have not been included in the review.

Trangia T 27-1, a classic alcohol stove with burner, windshield and pots.



Liquid-fuel stoves

All other fuels are of this type. Liquid fuel is placed in a sealed tank or bottle and pressurised by use of an air pump, and sometimes also heat. The fuel enters the burner head under pressure, is heated in a pipe and turned to vapour, then passes through a fine hole called a jet. Here it is mixed with air and sprayed into the ported burner head where it is burnt. Part of the stove needs to be heated for these stoves to work properly; this is called priming. A small amount of fuel is placed on to the stove and lit, which heats the burner head, causing fuel vaporisation to begin. Alcohol is often used for priming as it leaves the stove less 'sooty' and prevents flare-ups.

The most common and cleanest liquid fuel is Shellite, a highly volatile fuel that vapourises quickly. Have training before using any liquid-fuel stove as burns to people and equipment are a real hazard. Some stoves can burn other fuels such as unleaded petrol and diesel. However, these fuels contain additives that can block jets and fuel lines and they should only be used when Shellite is unavailable. In some countries the only readily available fuel is kerosene—a safe and efficient fuel although less volatile than

other fuels and requiring more effort to light.

Overall, liquid-fuel stoves burn hotter and use less fuel than other types of stoves. They are commonly used when a lot of cooking is required, such as when melting snow, or

on extended trips when fuel weight becomes more significant.

Weight

The total weight of a stove is the more important factor to consider; a stove isn't any



Top, Coleman Exponent Feather 442 Dual Fuel, bottom, MSR SimmerLite.

use without a fuel tank and fuel so don't consider only the weight of the burner. Gas stoves are usually the lightest for short trips, followed by Shellite stoves, multifuel stoves and alcohol stoves. There is a myth that alcohol burners are light, but the need for windshields and extra fuel makes them the heaviest.

To compare and estimate weights for trips longer than one week, allow around 50 grams (70 millilitres) of Shellite, 50 grams of gas or 100 grams (125 millilitres) of methylated

spirits a person a day. Double these amounts when melting snow or sterilising water for drinking. The two-day weights are for two people and include an extra ten per cent fuel allowance to reduce the risk of running out of fuel. The seven-day total weights are for two people and include extra or larger fuel bottles as required for the extra fuel.

Boiling time

This can be influenced by many things including pressure, temperature, windshields, pots and lids. The times were supplied by the manufacturer and should be used as a guide only.

Buy right

- Fuel type: work out which fuel type suits your needs. Liquid-fuel stoves are excellent in cold weather, gas stoves are simple and quick to start and alcohol stoves are cheap to run but slow.
- Windshields: most stoves perform poorly unless protected from wind. Some stoves are provided with windshields and reflectors or you can make your own from aluminium window flashing from hardware shops. Follow the manufacturers' recommendations as windshields can cause some stoves to get too hot and blow up.
- Pot sizes: check that the pots you will use fit comfortably on the stove without precise positioning.
- Maintenance: how easy is it to take the stove apart and repair it in the bush? Is it supplied with a spanner or designed to be opened by hand? Are replaceable parts such as O-rings and pump cups readily available, easily seen if dropped and easily replaced? Don't forget to buy spares—some manufacturers supply common parts as separate kits. Carry spare jets, O-rings and small parts in an empty film canister.
- Safety: consider who is going to use the stove. Alcohol and gas stoves are the simplest and safest while liquid-fuel stoves can be dangerous and are not suitable for inexperienced users.
- Fuel availability overseas: this varies widely—consult travel guides and the Web as some fuels have different names in other countries. Alcohol, gas canisters and Shellite can be hard to obtain in some countries. Unleaded petrol is readily obtained in developed countries and diesel is available almost everywhere. Kerosene is the most commonly used fuel where other fuels are hard to obtain, particularly in Third World countries.
- Flying: the International Association for Airlines (IATA) has approved methods for emptying fuel stoves and bottles and packing them safely for air travel in checked-in luggage. Airlines can still refuse any goods including a stove, so carefully read airline Web sites and pack stoves exactly as specified. Stoves with separate fuel tanks have less chance of being rejected.

Stoves

| | Fuel type | Dimensions, millimetres | Stove weight, grams | Fuel tank weight, grams | Fuel weight, grams | Total weight for two days, grams | Hose | Fuel tank type | Boiling time, minutes | Stability | Heat control | Quietness | Value | Comments | Approx. price, \$ | |
|---|-----------|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|-------|----------|--|-----|
| Campingaz France www.campingaz.com | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Twister 270 PZ | G | 110 x 110 x 105 | 235 | 365 | Incl | 600 | 1330 | N | Clip | 3:45 | •½ | •••½ | ••• | ••• | Piezo starter | 50 |
| Twister 270 HPZ | G | 145 x 145 x 105 | 285 | 365 | Incl | 650 | 1380 | N | Clip | 3:30 | •• | •••½ | ••• | •••½ | Piezo starter; pressure regulator | 60 |
| Coleman Exponent USA/France www.colemanaustralia.com.au | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Outlander Micro | G | 75 x 60 x 87 | 165 | 345 | Incl | 510 | 1200 | N | Screw | 4:30 | •½ | ••• | ••• | ••• | Compact, light and cheap | 40 |
| Feather 442 Dual Fuel | S U | 150 x 120 x 120 | 680 | Incl | 220 | 900 | 1520 | N | Integral | 4:00 | ••• | •••½ | •• | ••• | Popular single-unit stove | 125 |
| Apex II 445 | K S U | 250 x 250 x 100 | 420 | 100 | 220 | 740 | 1260 | Y | Bottle | 4:00 | ••• | •• | •• | ••• | | 170 |
| Gasmate Korea www.sitro.com.au | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Backpacker | G | 90 x 90 x 120 | 200 | 355 | Incl | 555 | 1265 | N | Screw | 4:30 | • | •••½ | ••• | ••• | Standard gas stove | 30 |
| Backpacker with Piezo | G | 125 x 125 x 110 | 280 | 355 | Incl | 635 | 1345 | N | Screw | 4:30 | •• | •••½ | •••½ | ••• | Piezo starter and windshield | 70 |
| Kovea Korea www.kovea.com | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Camp 3 Titanium | G | 81 x 68 x 38 | 90 | 360 | Incl | 450 | 1170 | N | Screw | 4:30 | • | •••½ | •• | ••• | Small and light | 75 |
| MSR USA/Korea www.msrs.org.com | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pocket Rocket | G | 100 x 50 x 50 | 85 | 360 | Incl | 445 | 1165 | N | Screw | 3:30 | • | ••• | ••• | ••• | Small and light | 70 |
| SimmerLite | S | 140 x 100 x 90 | 240 | 80 | 220 | 540 | 1080 | Y | Bottle | 3:45 | •• | ••• | •••½ | ••• | Lightest Shellite stove | 220 |
| Dragonfly | K S U | 155 x 125 x 90 | 395 | 80 | 220 | 695 | 1235 | Y | Bottle | 3:30 | ••• | •••½ | • | ••• | Noisy but versatile stove | 290 |
| Optimus Sweden www.optimus.se | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SVEA 123 † | S U | 100 x 100 x 130 | 550 | Incl | 120 | 670 | 1070 | N | Integral | 6:00 | •• | •• | ••• | ••½ | Grandaddy of 'em all. Self-presurising; built-in jet-clearing needle | 180 |
| Nova | D K S U | 86 x 135 x 65 | 420 | 120 | 220 | 760 | 1260 | Y | Bottle | 3:30 | ••• | ••• | • | ••• | Burns most fuels | 310 |
| Primus Sweden www.primus.se | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Alpine Micro | G | 75 x 50 x 85 | 100 | 355 | Incl | 455 | 1165 | N | Screw | 3:00 | • | •••½ | ••• | •• | Fast, light and small | 95 |
| Himalaya Vanfuel | D K S U | 165 x 88 x 86 | 425 | 120 | 220 | 765 | 1265 | Y | Bottle | 3:30 | ••• | •• | • | ••• | All-purpose liquid fuel | 170 |
| Omnifuel | D G K S U | 150 x 88 x 85 | 540 | 120 | 220 | 880 | 1380 | Y | Bottle or screw | 3:00 | ••• | ••½ | • | ••• | Burns almost any liquid fuel | 250 |
| Tatonka Vietnam www.tatonka.com | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Multi Set | A | 215 x 215 x 110 | 1100 | Incl | 560 | 1660 | 2780 | N | Integral | 10-15 | ••••• | •½ | •••• | •••• | Windshield plus pots for two people | 110 |
| Trangia Sweden www.trangia.se | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| T 27-1 Aluminium | A | 185 x 185 x 100 | 850 | Incl | 560 | 1410 | 2530 | N | Integral | 10-15 | ••••• | •½ | •••• | •••½ | Windshield plus pots for one person | 130 |
| T 25-1 Aluminium | A | 220 x 220 x 105 | 1100 | Incl | 560 | 1660 | 2780 | N | Integral | 10-15 | ••••• | •½ | •••• | •••½ | Windshield plus pots for two people | 140 |

• poor •• average ••• good •••• excellent Fuel type: Alcohol (methylated spirit), Diesel, Gas, Kerosene, Shellite, Unleaded petrol Dimensions: approximate length x width x height when packed Stove weight: Includes minimum equipment needed to use stove Fuel tank weight: Included as part of stove; for gas stoves this figure is the weight of a full cartridge Fuel weight: adequate for two people on a two-day trip. Included in fuel tank weight Total weight for two days: total weight of stove, bottles and fuel for two people for two days Total weight for seven days: total weight of stove, bottles and fuel for two people for seven days Hose: Yes/No Fuel tank type: aluminium Bottle, Clip gas cartridge that clips to stove Integral tank is part of stove. Screw gas cartridge screws on to stove Boiling time: the manufacturer's estimate of the time it takes to boil one litre of water Price: does not include fuel or fuel bottles unless an integral part of the stove The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

Stability

Stability in a stove is best provided by a wide base with pot supports that are wide in relation to the burner-head height. Some manufacturers produce clip-on base plates that improve stability; these should be considered, particularly for use on unstable surfaces such as snow.

Heat control

Stoves with the valve close to the jet give more instant heat control than those with the valve on an external pump. This rating also considers how easy it is to adjust the valve to provide a simmer. Stoves have been rated on the assumption that there is a sensible tank pressure.

Other brands available

| Brand | Distributor | Contact |
|-----------|------------------------------|--|
| Doite | MB Wragg (03) 9310 4696 & Co | |
| Snow Peak | | www.snowpeak.com |

Quietness

This is very subjective and generally not very important when selecting a stove—it is more of a comfort factor. This rating is based on the noise at normal heating levels, with the loudest stoves receiving the lowest scores.

Value

This rating was determined by the price in relation to its suitability for general bushwalking. Factors considered, in order of importance, were: price, stability, overall weight, fuel type, heat control and boiling time. Rating for specialist uses would change this order and hence the ratings. For example, when travelling overseas the ability to use many kinds of fuel would be the most important factor, while for alpine- or ultra-lightweight walking the weight would come first.

Bushwalking writer John Chapman has been contributing to *Wild* since the first issue. Although he loves all areas of this varied country, his favourite place is Tasmania. He enjoys all trips, particularly those that don't go as planned because they become memorable.

This survey was refereed by Greg Coire.

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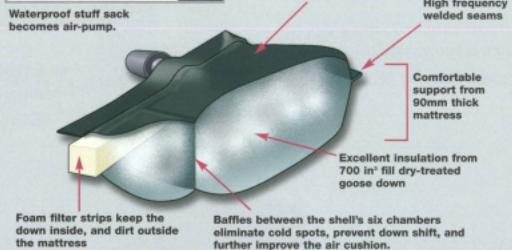
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Swiss Quality Design



| | | | | Resistance to heat transfer ("R" value) |
|------------------|------------|-------|-----------|---|
| Down Mat 7 short | 120 x 54cm | 515g | 20 x 9cm | 7.1 |
| Down Mat 7 | 178 x 54cm | 760g | 20 x 11cm | 7.1 |
| Down Mat 9 | 178 x 54cm | 920g | 23 x 14cm | 9.1 |
| Down Mat 9 DLX | 198 x 66cm | 1280g | 26 x 18cm | 9.1 |

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INFLATED NOTIONS?

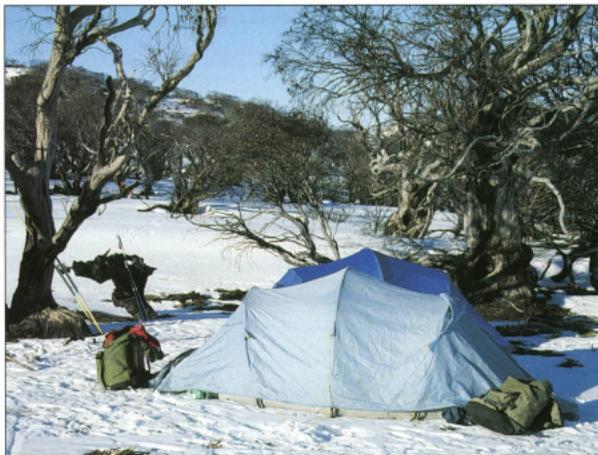
Self-inflating sleeping-mats, by Scott Edwards

Wild Gear Surveys: what they are and what they're not

(See box on page 69.)

SLEEPING-MATS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR A GOOD night's sleep after an arduous day on the track, slopes or cliffs. They provide comfort and, most importantly, reduce the amount of heat lost to the cold ground. Even the warmest sleeping-bag can be let down by inadequate insulation underneath you, especially where down- or synthetic fills are flattened by body weight.

Go back 20 years or so and it was common to see closed-cell sleeping-mats (such as the fabled yellow Karrimat) hanging off a rucksack. These mats are made from pressure- or chemically blown foams and are practically indestructible. The cheaper versions often aren't—those who have walked the Western Arthurs will have seen the little



Sleeping-mat territory. (Near Bull's Peaks, Snowy Mountains, New South Wales.) Roger Lembit

chunks of coloured foam that litter the track. Closed-cell mats do not require maintenance but they are bulky, uncomfortable and provide little insulation; facts that have led to the popularity of a new breed, the self-inflating mat.

Self-inflating mats have a core of open-cell foam surrounded by an airtight outer fabric with a regulatory valve. The trapped air fulfils two roles; it insulates the sleeper from the cold ground and provides comfort. Denser foams restrict air flow and convective heat loss, providing more insulation and comfort. However, they are heavier and more bulky so compromises are necessary. A lot of manufacturers use perforated or cored foam to reduce weight but the larger pockets of air also reduce the insulation to some extent. Unfortunately, there are no standardised insulation tests for mats. The packed size of the mat will give some idea as to the amount of insulation: the thicker it is, the more insulation. Using thickness and roughly guessing



Above, Black & Wolf Lightweight 3/4, below, the Exped Down Mat family—mama, papa and baby mat.

the amount of foam in a mat will give some indication of its relative warmth.

Old ideas become new again and a couple of inflating mats have been included. These are similar to air mattresses or Lilos except that a down or synthetic fill (similar to that used in sleeping-bags) has been incorporated in the air tubes to reduce the problem of too much air flow and subsequent heat loss.

Buy right

- Try out mats in the shop. There's no point buying the thinnest, smallest-packing mat if it's not going to provide a comfortable night's sleep.
- Using a fully inflated mat is often like sleeping on a balloon; use the valve and deflate it to your desired level. This might also convince you to buy a thicker mat.
- A well-made mat may cost more but can give long years of service.
- Does it have a good, non-slip surface? Restless sleepers may need this on the top and bottom to reduce midnight surfing around the tent.
- Machine-rolled mats can look incredibly small on the shelf—see whether you can roll it to that size easily. This can be exasperating for some mats, and a bigger stuff sack might be needed.
- Does it have a stuff sack and repair kit? If it doesn't, buy them and carry them always!
- Where will it fit in your pack? Carrying it inside the pack is best although some mats are too large for this.
- Remember that the thickness-equals-warmth ratio is reduced when the inner foam is cored or perforated for weight reduction.
- Are the valves easily replaced if broken?
- Check the warranty and what it covers. Broken valves or delamination between the foam and surface fabric is not always the fault of the user.

Self-inflating sleeping-mats

| | Dimensions, length x width x thickness, centimeters | Weight, grams | Surface fabric | Stuff sack | Repair kit | Cold conditions | Snow conditions | Comfort | Value | Comments | Avg price, \$ |
|---|---|---------------|--|------------|------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|-------|--|---------------|
| Artiach Spain www.artiach.com | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Confort Mat Short | 120 x 50 x 3.5 | 700 | Non-slip, textured polyester | Y | N | ••• | ••• | ••• | ••• | Round lip two-part valve system for easier manual inflation | 100 |
| Compact Mat Short | 120 x 50 x 2.5 | 620 | Non-slip, Ripstop polyester | Y | N | •• | •• | •• | ••• | As above | 110 |
| Trek Mat Long | 185 x 50 x 3 | 1000 | Diamond-shaped textured fabric with non-slip | Y | N | ••• | ••½ | ••½ | ••• | As above | 120 |
| Black Wolf China www.blackwolf.com.au | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lightweight 3/4 | 122 x 51 x 2.5 | 650 | Non-slip polyester | Y | Y | •• | •• | •• | ••• | CFC free; antifungal foam; compression-straps | 80 |
| Standard 3/4 | 122 x 51 x 3.8 | 1150 | As above | Y | Y | ••• | ••• | ••• | ••• | As above | 90 |
| Standard Full Size | 183 x 51 x 3.8 | 1450 | As above | Y | Y | ••• | ••• | ••• | ••• | As above | 125 |
| Caribee China www.caribee.com.au | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hike Mat - King | 190 x 64 x 5 | 1350 | Non-slip polyester | Y | Y | •••• | ••• | •••• | ••• | Twin ABS plastic corner valves; antifungal foam; compression-straps | 100 |
| Hike Mat - Xtra King | 190 x 64 x 6.3 | 1490 | As above | Y | Y | •••• | •••½ | •••• | ••• | As above | 105 |
| Coleman China www.colemanaustralia.com.au | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Voyager 3.8 cm 3/4 | 122 x 51 x 3.8 | 950 | Non-slip polyester | Y | Y | ••• | ••• | ••• | ••• | Antifungal foam; brass valves | 90 |
| Voyager 5 cm | 190 x 63 x 5 | 1750 | As above | Y | Y | •••• | •••½ | •••• | ••• | As above | 100 |
| DMH China www.dmh.aust.com | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lightweight 3/4 | 122 x 51 x 2.5 | 705 | Non-slip polyester | Y | Y | •• | •• | •• | ••• | Compact, budget priced mat | 90 |
| Standard 3/4 | 122 x 51 x 3.8 | 855 | As above | Y | Y | ••• | ••• | ••• | ••• | Full foam | 100 |
| Standard Long | 183 x 51 x 3.8 | 1325 | As above | Y | Y | ••• | ••• | ••• | ••• | As above | 120 |
| Exped Switzerland www.exped.com | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sim Short Light | 120 x 50 x 2.5 | 425 | Non-slip polyester | Y | N | •• | •• | •• | ••• | Cored foam for reduced weight; antimildew treatment in foam | 100 |
| Sim Long Light Delux | 190 x 65 x 5 | 1870 | As above | Y | N | •••• | •••½ | •••• | ••• | As above | 180 |
| Down Mat 7 | 178 x 54 x 7 | 760 | As above | Y | N | •••• | ••• | ••• | ••• | Inflatable air-tube style with down fill for warmth; combination pump/stuff sack | 230 |
| Insulmat China www.insulmat.com | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Max Thermo | 183 x 51 x 6.3 | 670 | Non-slip, textured Ripstop nylon | Y | Y | •••• | ••• | ••• | ••• | Inflatable air-tube style with synthetic fill for warmth | 90 |
| Max-Lite W | 168 x 51 x 2.5 | 725 | As above | Y | Y | •• | •• | •• | ••• | Designed for women; strategically placed perforated and high-density foam for warmth and support | 135 |
| Max Mat | 183 x 51 x 3.8 | 980 | As above | Y | Y | ••• | ••• | ••• | ••• | Winter mat; uses both lateral-cored- and die-cut foam for warmth with light weight; brass valves | 150 |

Most mats reviewed will inflate themselves, given enough time, but a bit of oral inflation is sometimes required. Blowing directly into the mat can introduce moisture and bacteria or fungus into the foam. Whether a sleeping-mat is new or old, don't inhale! Foams are often treated with an antifungal agent but it's worth leaving the air valve open whenever possible to allow the foam to dry out. It's best to store them this way when not in use.

Dimensions

For the ultimate in warmth and comfort nothing beats a mat that's the length of your

body and generously wide. Those who are conscious of weight and space considerations will opt for short mats that leave the legs exposed. Placing clothes or an empty pack under the legs will alleviate the discomfort to some extent. The manufacturer supplied dimensions for a fully inflated mat.

Weight

Basic mats that have a full foam core tend to be the heaviest. Some manufacturers perforate or core out the foam to reduce the weight. Outer fabrics can contribute significantly to the overall weight, as can stuff sacks and repair kits. The weights were provided by the manufacturer and are useful as a rough guide only. Weights were checked with hand scales but it's worth noting that the actual weights varied considerably even within mats of the same brand and model. Mats that weigh more than two kilograms were not included.

Other brand available

Brand Distributor Contact

| | | |
|---------|------------------|----------------|
| Ultimat | Wildside Designs | (03) 5282 5654 |
|---------|------------------|----------------|

Surface fabric

Manufacturers need to use outer fabrics that are strong and puncture resistant while still thin and light; something that often comes at a price. Inflated mats are easily punctured so make sure that the ground is clear of sharp sticks or rocks before lying down. Most brands utilise some kind of non-slip fabric to prevent you from sliding off the mat during the night. Contoured surfaces can also reduce slippage. The surface fabric is bonded to the inner foam with glue so don't leave hot cups or Trangia bowls on your sleeping-mat. The heat can cause the glue to come away leaving tell-tale delamination bubbles. Similarly, if you leave a mat inflated in a hot

Coleman Voyager 5 cm.



Self-inflating sleeping-mats continued

| | Dimensions, length x width x thickness, cm/cm/cm | Weight, grams | Surface fabric | Stuff sack | Repair kit | Cold conditions | Snow conditions | Comfort | Value | Comments | Aprox. price, \$ |
|--|--|---------------|----------------------------------|------------|------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|-------|--|------------------|
| Kathmandu China www.kathmandu.com.au | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-inflating Mat Lite 3/4 | 120 x 51 x 3.8 | 710 | Non-slip polyester | Y | Y | *** | *** | *** | *** | Perforated foam for reduced weight | 100 |
| Self-inflating Mat 38 mm Long | 183 x 51 x 3.8 | 1160 | As above | Y | Y | *** | *** | *** | *** | Compression-straps | 130 |
| Self-inflating Mat 50 mm long | 196 x 63 x 5 | 1880 | As above | Y | Y | **** | ***½ | **** | *** | As above | 160 |
| Metzeler Germany www.metzeler-schaum.de | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Std Long | 181 x 51 x 3.5 | 1100 | Non-slip nylon | Y | Y | *** | *** | *** | *** | Antifungal foam; metal valve; contoured surface | 150 |
| Air Light Long | 181 x 51 x 3 | 850 | As above | Y | Y | *** | ***½ | ***½ | ***½ | As above | 170 |
| Air Maxi | 191 x 61 x 7 | 1700 | As above | Y | Y | **** | **** | **** | *** | As above | 220 |
| Ortlieb Germany www.ortlieb.com | | | | | | | | | | | |
| L111 | 184 x 52 x 2.5 | 980 | Non-slip nylon | N | Y | ** | ** | ** | **½ | Abrasion and puncture-resistant surface fabric; compression-straps; non-slip coating | 200 |
| L112 | 184 x 52 x 3.8 | 1180 | As above | N | Y | *** | *** | *** | ***½ | As above | 210 |
| L113 | 184 x 52 x 5 | 1370 | As above | N | Y | **** | ***½ | **** | ***½ | As above | 285 |
| Outer Limits China www.oztrail.com.au | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hiker Xtreme | 122 x 51 x 2.5 | 650 | Non-slip, textured Ripstop nylon | Y | Y | ** | ** | ** | *** | CFC free, antifungal foam | 80 |
| Hiker Mat | 183 x 51 x 3.5 | 990 | As above | Y | Y | *** | *** | *** | *** | As above | 110 |
| Roman China www.roman.com.au | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Moon Mat Lightweight 3/4 | 122 x 51 x 2.5 | 610 | Non-slip polyester | Y | N | ** | ** | ** | *** | Perforated foam for reduced weight; non-slip coating | 80 |
| Moon Mat Std Long | 185 x 51 x 3.8 | 1245 | As above | Y | N | *** | *** | *** | *** | Antifungal foam; non-slip coating | 100 |
| Snowgum China www.snowgum.com.au | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Siestamat Lightweight 3/4 | 122 x 51 x 2.5 | 700 | Non-slip polyester | Y | Y | ** | ** | ** | *** | Perforated foam for reduced weight; checkerboard game print | 90 |
| Siestamat Lightweight Long | 183 x 51 x 2.5 | 850 | As above | Y | Y | ** | ** | ** | *** | As above | 100 |
| Siestamat Std Full | 183 x 51 x 3.8 | 1400 | As above | Y | Y | *** | *** | *** | *** | As above | 100 |
| Therm-a-Rest USA www.thermarrest.com | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pro Lite 3 Short | 119 x 51 x 2.5 | 370 | Non-slip textured polyester | N | N | ** | ** | ** | ***** | Incredibly light and compact; perforated foam; non-slip 'sticky dot' base | 160 |
| Expedition Regular | 183 x 51 x 4.5 | 990 | As above | N | N | **** | ****½ | ****½ | *** | Perforated foam; non-slip base; comfort with low weight | 170 |
| Luxury Camp Large | 196 x 63 x 5 | 1900 | As above | N | N | **** | ****½ | **** | ***½ | Solid foam; fleecy top; non-slip base; contoured surface for comfort | 290 |

tent, you might return to find a balloon of hot air. Yes, mats do float but they don't last long as surf mats or Lilos!

Stuff sack and repair kit

A stuff sack is essential for protecting your mat, especially if the mat is to be carried on the outside of your pack. Similarly, a repair kit must be carried—a sleeping-mat becomes a depressingly useless sheet of flattened foam when punctured. Some mats don't come with these, as shown in the table, so you may want to factor this into the price.

Cold or snow conditions

Lightweight mats around two-and-a-half centimetres thick are adequate for cold conditions but thicker mats provide a warmer night's sleep. When camping on frozen ground or snow, a thicker, more insulating mat of three-and-a-half centimetres or more is best.

Comfort

Simply speaking, the thicker the mat the more comfortable it is. This is especially evident when camping on rough ground. Within mats of the same thickness a full foam mat is usually the most comfortable but a stra-



Insulmat Max Mtn (for those who wonder what's inside).

tegically perforated or cored mat will provide similar results and weigh less. For maximum comfort inflate the mat fully and lie

on it, then use the valve to let out a little air so that you sink into the mat slightly.

Value

Value was established by taking into consideration the features required by the average bushwalker and the price.

Walkers who are conscious of space and weight considerations will find that spending a bit more money can save many grams in pack weight.

Price

Prices are based on the average retail as found in most outdoors shops in the CBD of capital cities around Australia.

Scott Edwards has fond memories of Therm-a-Rest tobogganing and wine-soaked snow camps after a hard day's ski-touring around Mt Lach or Mt Featherston. He now uses cheaper, more disposable pack liners and tries to purchase better vintages using pocket money from freelance journalism.

This survey was refereed by Simon Langford.

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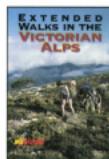
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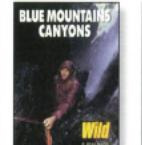
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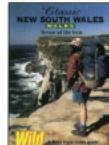
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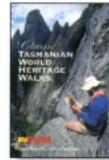
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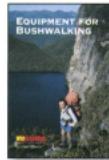
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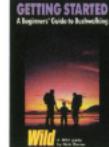
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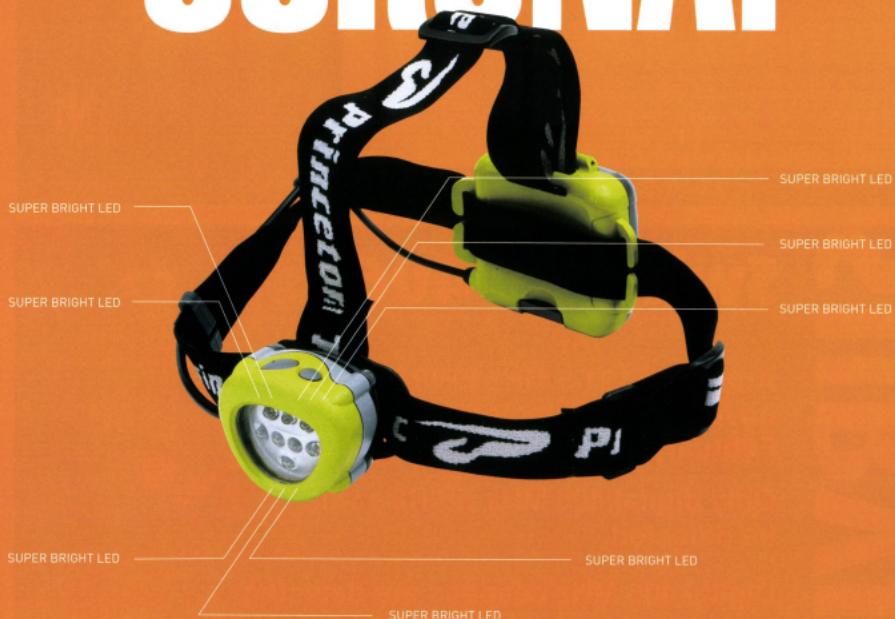
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Garments and fabrications

A new range of three-layer **soft-shell fabrics** from **Gore-Tex** includes stretch- and non-stretch fabrics that are claimed to be the first 'durably waterproof' soft-shell material. Garments made of the fabric are seam-sealed while the fabric itself is said to be more than twice as warm as traditional three-layer Gore-Tex.

Kathmandu is currently the only manufacturer in Australia using the fabric but apparently it's only a matter of time before it takes over the world, or at least the soft-shell market. Phone 1800 226 703 for further details.

Marmot's Chinook Windshirt is a hooded jacket with a full-length zip that is claimed to weigh only 85 grams—that's about the same as a bar of chocolate. It is apparently wind resistant, water-repellent, breathable and comes in a range of snazzy colours: unfortunately, you can't eat it. RRP \$200. Marmot has also released a new **thermal fabric** called **BacteriaStat**, which is very technical indeed if the language in the press release is anything to go by. Silver ions in the fabric apparently shut down the breeding process of bacteria, inhibiting the dreaded 'thermal stink' for the life of the garment. Marmot products are available from LA Imports; call (02) 9913 7155. RRP for a silk-weight thermal range from \$60 to 70.

Sharkskin garments from **Adventure Extreme** are designed for comfortable, non-restrictive use in the **water**. It is claimed that the three-layer Polartec fabric used is wind-proof, allows four-way stretch, has a fleece lining for warmth and an abrasion-resistant outer surface. Garments available range from **vests** to **socks, shorts** and, our favourite, a **full-body suit**. Further details are available from (02) 4966 1377. RRP \$149 for the short-sleeve vest and \$159 for the paddling shorts.

How cool are we in our Sharkskin suits!



BOOTS glorious BOOTS

According to **Outdoor Agencies**, the **Scarpa Phantom 8000** is 'the world's best **expedition boot** with gaiter'. For \$1399, it'd want to be! It is a lightweight double boot with built-in gaiter designed for use in the Himalayas that is said to be highly comfortable and warm, while still allowing precision climbing on extreme ground. The outer boot is apparently made from a combination of Cordura and insulating foam sealed between two layers of aluminium, with an extra layer of insulation, while the gaiter has a waterproof membrane and zip. Another Scarpa boot new to Australia is

the **ZG-65 GTX**, said to be the only **trekking boot** available in the country lined with XCR Gore-Tex, the 'first durably waterproof fabrics in the extremely breathable category'. The boots have Vibram soles and are available in men's and women's fit; phone (02) 9438 2266. RRP \$279.

Hi-Tec has released a **new range of boots** that includes the 'lightest travel/walking shoe on the market', the **Sierra V Lite Leather Low**, claimed to weigh only 405 grams. The range of boots looks good in the brochure, with everything from waterproof models designed for cold conditions to lightweight walking shoes. The materials used sound impressive and this range seems to signal a new direction for the company. **Skye Group** distributes the boots; phone (02) 9502 6300 for more information. RRP ranges from \$130 to 300.

Keen has a new light-weight **walking boot** on the market. The **Boston Chukka**

has a nubuck upper and looks good (too good to wear walking according to the Managing Editor!) and seems comfortable with its padded, anatomical insole and roomy last. The boots feature the same toe-guard as the rest of the range; contact **Lifestyles Industries Group** on (03) 9878 3833. RRP \$240.



The Keen Boston Chukka is rather pukka.

'The world's best expedition boot with gaiter' is yours for a mere \$1399 a pair.



New **track-running shoes** from **5.10** are claimed to be very lightweight, extremely grippy and offer good support to your feet in rough conditions. It is also a given that they will be more comfortable than your climbing boots! Contact **Spelean** on (02) 9966 9800. RRP \$195.

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LIGHT UP YOUR LIFE

The **headtorch** market just keeps expanding. **Princeton Tec** has a few newies including the **Corona**, which features eight super-bright, wide-angle LEDs. Apparently you can switch between using eight, five, three or one at a time, and 16 different settings—light for all needs, making it ‘the brightest and most efficient area light’. However, if decision making is not your strong point, beware! The **Yukon HL** is a LED hybrid, allowing you to change between a very bright, one watt bulb for distance use and three five millimetre LED for close-up applications. **Outdoor Agencies** distributes the torches, RRP \$99 and \$130, respectively.

A new **multitool** from **Gerber** has the usual locking knife, scissors and other tools that we now expect. But the **Nautlius** also has an LED lighting unit that can light up the area in front of the tool while it is in use. It has four modes of lighting use and looks versatile and practical. Contact **Fiskars** for further information on (03) 8645 2400. RRP around \$100.

Leatherman's new ten centimetre **multitool** claims to have the largest built-in knife for a tool of this size and the **Charge** is said to keep its



*Is it a knife, a torch or a tool kit?
Gerber's Nautilus is all of the
above.*

edge for three times longer than normal. The **Xti** model is also the only multitool to incorporate a cutting hook—apparently capable of cutting through almost anything, including ‘an arm, for those emergency situations’. Let’s hope it never needs to be put to the test! Distributed by **Zen Imports**; phone 1800 064 200. RRP \$250.

Knick-Knacks

What's in a watch?

It depends which one you buy! The **Suunto X9** has a 12-channel GPS as well as all the features from the Suunto X8, including a compass, altimeter, barometer, thermometer and PC interface. It has a rechargeable battery that will last for up to two months depending on the mode used. It looked a little ridiculous on the skinnier wrists in the

office but will do everything but the washing-up. Distributed by **Adventure Extreme**. RRP is \$1625.

Silva has a new range of waterproof hand-held anemometers (**wind measurers**) that are designed for activities where the weather and wind are important—sounds like it includes us! The **ADC Wind** has a clock function and measures the wind and temperature, including the wind-chill, while the **ADC Pro** measures the humidity, altitude and barometric pressure as well. **Macson Trading** distributes the products; phone (03) 9489 9766. RRP from \$179–\$50.

Glide, glide, glide

'Official skin lubricant' of the USA Triathlon—a slippery claim indeed! **Bodyglide** is an antichafing, antiblister formula that is reported to be sweat proof, waterproof, non-greasy, non-oily and gentle on the skin. It comes in three types: **Bodyglide**; **Bodyglide SPF** (containing sunscreen) and **Warm FX**, said to relieve pain and soreness. It is distributed by **Adventure Extreme**. RRP \$20–\$25. ☺

trix
Special delivery
Your second
night's dinner;
by Stephen Bunton

I've already talked about taking a frozen casserole or curry for your first night's dinner (Wild no 65). I've even recommended taking this frozen in your billy to save the weight and mess of a container. My next suggestion is that you freeze your second night's dinner and use the insulating properties of a Postpakt to reduce the risk of it going off. Put your meal in a 'ziplock' bag and freeze it. Place it in one of those waterproof insulated Postpaks and it should last two days in your pack.

Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.

New and innovative products of relevance to the rucksack sports (on loan to Wild and/or information about them, including high-resolution digital photos (on CD, not by email) or colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or contact us by email: editorialadmin@wild.com.au

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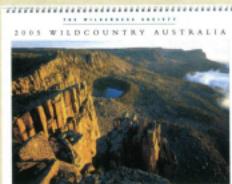


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TASMANIAN

**Eli Greig and others report
on the World Environment
Day rallies**

In what has been reported as the largest nationwide environmental protest in more than a decade, tens of thousands of people rallied against the destruction of Tasmania's old-growth- and high-conservation-value forests. With both the Tasmanian ALP and Liberal parties solid in their commitment to unrivalled levels of wood-chipping, it seems that only federal intervention in the lead up to this year's election can save the forests. On World Environment Day weekend, 5–6 June, there were protests across the nation, sending a powerful message that logging Tasmania's unique forests must end.

In Melbourne 15 000 people marched through the CBD in the largest rally of its kind for more than 15 years. Gardening guru Peter Cundell and award-winning author Richard Flanagan gave inspiring and passionate speeches and there were spectacular performances from The Cat Empire, Paul Kelly, Kutch Edwards and David Bridie, among others. Triple J's Adam Spencer and Richard Flanagan addressed a public meeting of more than 1700 in the Sydney Town Hall. Hundreds of people also protested in Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane.

The facts

- Tasmania exports more than five million tonnes of native-forest wood-chips, more than twice the volume of all the other States combined.
- Industry and government are converting vast swathes of native forests to plantations (approximately 10 000 hectares a year). Tasmania has one of the highest rates of land clearing, in proportion to its size, in the developed world.
- Every other State government has banned the use of native forest for electricity generation—not so Tassie, which has proposals for three wood-fired power stations.
- Rainforests are still cleared and wood-chipped in Tasmania.
- Areas of forest are clear-felled and then fire-bombed from the air. Native animals die from consuming poisoned carrots laid to protect plantation seedlings from being eaten.



Meanwhile environmental groups have welcomed four consecutive, major breakthroughs in the campaign to stop Japanese paper manufacturers from using wood-chips from Tasmania's old-growth forests.

Two major importers and consumers of Tasmanian wood-chips, Mitsubishi Corporation and Ricoh Company, have pledged to stop the use and importation of Tasmanian old-growth forest products. Ricoh Company

FOREST NEWS



tion said that it would make a transition to regrowth and plantations 'as soon as possible'.

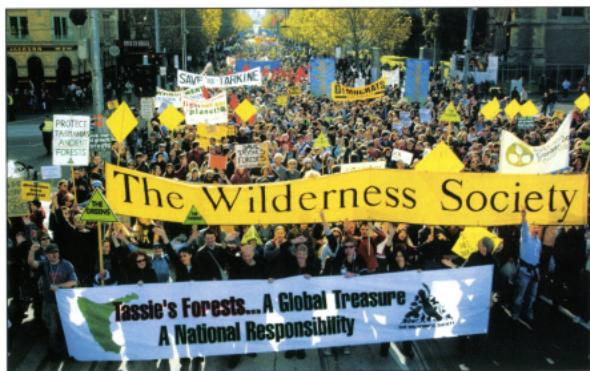
In March Nippon Paper Industries, the largest customer for Tasmanian wood-chips, wrote to the Tasmanian Government urging an end to the debate over the logging of old-growth forests in Tasmania. Fuji Xerox has also written to Greenpeace Japan saying that it is pursuing a policy of sourcing paper made from plantations or recycled paper and that by 2010 it will no longer be buying paper made from virgin wood pulp.

Banksia Environmental Awards announced in June. The notice listed the controversial company as follows: 'Gunns Limited—World Leader in Sustainable Forest Management, TAS.' Amongst a flood of protests, additional material about Gunns was given to the Banksia board, who contacted the company and asked whether it would like to withdraw.

Gunns spokesperson Carlton Frame says the company is disappointed that organisers and judges caved in to lobbying by green groups and says that there is no justification for discarding the company.



Top left, outside the Victorian State Library during the Melbourne rally. Chris Baxter. **Above,** public meeting in the Sydney Town Hall. Dean Sewell. **Left,** Melbourne's Swanston Street packed with protesters. Eli Greig



wrote to Greenpeace stating, 'we requested our vendors that raw materials for our paper product should not be those acquired from primary (old-growth) forest or high-conservation-value forests'. The Mitsubishi Corpora-

In an ironic and bizarre turn of events Gunns Ltd, the world's biggest hardwood wood-chipper, was initially listed as one of seven finalists in the Business Environmental Responsibility & Leadership category of the

But Greens Senator Bob Brown had a different view. This company's plan fell on its own word. It was CEO John Gay's own boast on Channel Nine that Gunns poisons protected animals in the Tasmanian forests which revolted the award judges.

▲ Act now

The Wilderness Society is running a federal election campaign to improve the environmental package of all the political parties. To help, please contact the Federal Election Campaigner Karina Doughty on (03) 9639 5455.

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Development threat in South-west Tasmania

Helen Gee outlines the plans for Cockle Creek

Cockle Creek is well known as the starting-point for the famous South Coast walk. The natural and cultural values of this area are considered significant enough for it to be managed according to the World Heritage Area Management Plan (WHAMP). Yet development plans for the area include a lodge, 80 cabins and a 50 metre jetty at Cockle Creek East. An 800 metre road into the Southwest National Park will also be constructed.

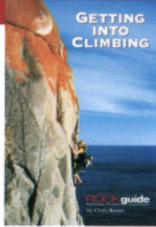
An alteration was made to the WHAMP to allow the construction of the Cockle Creek East development—this amendment was approved in February 2002. The process entailed zoning the development site as part of an extended Cockle Creek East Visitor Services Site. The proposal faced opposition at the planning stage by many people including Tasmanian Aborigines and Bob Brown.

The project is on hold for a few months while the nearby Catamaran Bridge is reconstructed to let the bulldozers move in. Concerned Tasmanians consider that to allow resorts inside National Parks is a dangerous precedent that must be strongly resisted.

Act now

Write to the Project Manager of Stage Designs, Rod King at rodk@stagedesign.com.au and cc any emails to the Director, David Marriner at reception@marrinertheatres.com.au For more information visit www.tnpa.asn.au

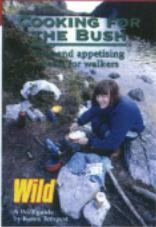
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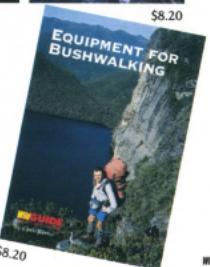
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Australia keeps the coal fire burning

...while Russia commits to the Kyoto Protocol,
by Eli Greig

In a dramatic and unexpected development, Russia announced that it would formally ratify the Kyoto Protocol on climate change. In what could be a negative move for Australia, the Federal Government still refuses to ratify the Protocol, leaving Australia and the USA in an increasingly isolated position within the international community.



Many environmentalists and energy economists agree that signing the Protocol, in conjunction with a market-based mechanism such as a greenhouse-gas tax, is an important step toward encouraging energy efficiency, expanding the market for renewable energy, and curbing Australia's reliance on non-renewable resources.

Meanwhile, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on 16 June that John Howard has released a national energy statement that slashes \$1.5 billion from fuel taxes and confirms that coal will be the major source of future energy production. This came days before the *Age* reported on 19 June that a major study has found that Australia creates more greenhouse gases a person than any other developed country, and 27 per cent more than the USA, the second-worst offender. These emissions are mainly caused by our heavy reliance on coal for electricity, coupled with the gases produced through transportation, and through the production of non-ferrous metals. The government did not increase the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target, which requires a percentage of power—at present two per cent—to come from environmentally friendly sources such as solar or wind power.

VICTORIAN NATIONAL PARK ADDITIONS



Hopetoun Falls, part of the area that will be protected in the extended Otways National Park. Eli Greig

The *Age* reported on 4 June that Victoria's park system has been expanded by 37 000 hectares, with more than one-third of this area added to National Parks and the remainder to conservation reserves. Parks that benefit include the Lerderderg State Park, Mount Arapiles-National State Park and the Grampians National Park.

Meanwhile, Eli Greig reports that the final decision on the size and the scope of a greater Otways National Park is now out of the community's hands and in the domain of the Victorian Environment Assessment Council. VEAC has proposed that the vast majority of forested public land in the Otways (146 000 hectares) be

included within a greatly enlarged Otways National Park and a Forest Park. Both the current Otways National Park and the Angahook-Lorne State Park would be subsumed into the greater park, as would the Carlisle and Melba Gully State Parks and various smaller reserves.

There appear to be excellent, expanded bushwalking opportunities in the Greater Otways National Park, with money earmarked for a Trans Otway Walking Track stretching from the hills behind the popular resort town of Lorne all the way to the tip of Cape Otway. However, there is some concern about the concept of a 'Forest Park' and the concessions that this might entail.

Environmental forest labelling

Megan Clinton tells her concerns

You may have seen glossy advertisements for ecoSelect on TV or in the 'Good Weekend' section of the *Age*. Yet ecoSelect is just a new label given to timber coming out of Australia's native forests. To the logging industry, ecoSelect means business as usual: logging and wood-chipping of old-growth forests (of which less than eight per cent remain). Environmental organisations such as The Wilderness Society strongly reject ecoSelect's

claim to be an environmentally friendly product.

EcoSelect's primary measure of sustainability is that trees grow back. Trees do grow back but ecosystems do not. Scientists have calculated that it could take as long as 1500–2500 years for a clear-felled forest to regain all the structural and habitat features of the original forest. By buying ecoSelect, you contribute to the ongoing destruction of old-growth forests.

Together let's give our land a hand.



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Some of our unique native plants and animals are under threat, but we're working on it. The Australian Government has put in motion the largest environmental rescue plan ever to conserve and restore vital habitat for plants and animals.

People across Australia are working to protect native species – such as the Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo.

On South Australia's Eyre Peninsula, local groups are working to rebuild and protect the endangered species' habitat.

Armed with \$30,000 of Australian Government funding, they have been working with the local landholders, conserving and rebuilding the bird's native habitat, and protecting the bird's eggs and chicks.

Project officer Sarah Way said the number of breeding

pairs of birds in the area has increased, and the population has grown to between 30-34 birds at last count.

This is just one example of the thousands of environmental restoration projects happening across the country with support from States, Territories and communities. You too can help in your local region. Together, let's give our land a hand.

Call 1800 552 008
or visit www.lendahand.gov.au



Australian Government

Wood-chips

Funding for forestry

The Howard Government gave more than a quarter of a million dollars to a study into how Tasmania's Tarkine could be better logged for deep red myrtle. According to the Greens this is 'yet another undeclared subsidy to Britton Brothers, the beneficiary of the proposed logging'.

Crunch time for the Victorian Alps

Geoff Mosley reports that, in an overdue move, the Victorian Environment Minister has appointed a task force to consider the future options for cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park. The task force sought submissions from the current licensees, from stakeholders and interest groups and was due to report in July 2004. Grazing is a minor land use compared with heritage and catchment protection and any recommendation other than complete removal of the cattle will guarantee continuing controversy. For further information, see *Wild* no 91 or visit www.cowpaddock.com

Kakadu contamination report delayed

Eli Greig reports that a Northern Territory Government department is still finalising a report into what went wrong during the water contamination incident at the Ranger Uranium Mine, in Kakadu National Park, and whether there are grounds for prosecution. Twenty-eight workers at the mine reported nausea, headaches and stomach cramps after drinking uranium-contaminated water in March. The report will be referred to the Federal Government when it is complete.

Forests Act is no solution

Proposed changes to the *Forests Act* will decrease the Victorian Government's accountability and obligation to consider biodiversity, according to Environment East Gippsland. There is technically not a time frame for the implementation of sustainability criteria and the Bill does not allow community consultation over logging areas. Other changes to the 'vague and unenforceable' legislation make it harder for logging protesters to win appeals in court.

Plastic bag war

Every time you refuse a plastic bag at the checkout Paddy Pallin is donating 20 cents to Clean Up Australia. Many retailers including Coles Myer and Woolworths are supporting the initiative, which runs until the end of the year. More than six million tonnes of rubbish end up in our ocean each year, much of it plastic, killing wildlife in the

thousands. However, conservation groups including WHEN and Planet Ark continue to urge the introduction of a mandatory levy on all plastic bags in supermarkets. Overseas this has been shown to drastically reduce the problem.

National Park or toxic dump?

The Victorian National Parks Association reports that the Victorian Government has proposed turning bushland near Hattah-Kulkyne National Park in the Mallee into a toxic-waste facility. The native bushland on the edge of the park would be cleared and the facility built in what was left. It is feared that this would endanger wildlife and destroy the scenic and recreational values of the area.

Hunter Island back-down

Hunter Island is a conservation area situated off the coast of north-west Tasmania, managed by the Parks & Wildlife Service. Approximately 85 per cent of the island, or 6000 hectares, is held under a Crown lease for grazing purposes. The Australian Bush Heritage Fund had a commercial contract to buy the lease and manage it for conservation—this had secured 'in principle agreement' from the Tasmanian Government in December 2003. In a highly questionable decision in May the government refused the transfer of the lease; instead the process of selling the lease is to begin again and the continuation of grazing is to be considered. Visit www.bushheritage.org for more information.

Park logging to be investigated by Auditor

During the bushfires of January 2003 a backburn line was to be created along a boundary of the Snowy National Park, Victoria. Instead, a huge 'firebreak' was cut that stretched for 60 kilometres. The logs were taken to local sawmills. Environment East Gippsland reports that after environmental groups had been pressing for an investigation into this logging for over a year, the resulting report was finally 'swept under the carpet'. The Victorian Auditor-General is now investigating the actions of the Department of Sustainability & Environment during the fires.

'Protection' for the tiger quoll?

The Federal Government recently announced that the tiger quoll's status should be upgraded to 'endangered' and a number of new legislative measures have been introduced to upgrade protection. Environ-

ment East Gippsland reports that however well-intentioned these measures, they are open to interpretation—and this is done at a local level, by those who are compromised by their involvement in the logging industry.

Church damns logging of water catchments

According to the *Age* on 28 June, the Uniting Church's social justice division in Tasmania and Victoria has concluded that the logging of Melbourne's water catchments should be urgently re-examined. Before taking a stand on the issue the church division studied a report designed to inform members on forest issues. It will take its concerns to the synod in September.

Little Aussie battlers

Brian Purdue and Dennis Hirst, two 'ordinary Australian blokes' from the Hunter Valley, New South Wales, were recently awarded the Australian Conservation Foundation's foremost award, the Peter Rawlinson Conservation Award. The two men have been working independently to protect and restore the Hexham Wetlands and surrounding areas for the past decade. They were originally introduced to the area through bird-watching and fishing, respectively.

Just another job...

Tasmanian Premier Paul Lennon has a new chief of staff—the former Editor of the *Launceston Examiner*! The *Potoroo Review* reported the appointment, along with quotes from the Tasmanian Greens that the paper was strongly pro-wood-chipping 'anti-Green' and '...often indistinguishable from the Labor position'.

Basslink disrupts marine life?

Helen Gee reports that Basslink has unacceptable economic and environmental costs that are contrary to the *Environmental Protection & Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999*. The metallic return and fibre-optic cable at present being laid across Bass Strait will intercept the coastlines of Victoria and Tasmania at right angles. Scientists suspect that this will have an adverse impact on the magnetic navigation sense of whales and dolphins as well as on other marine creatures. Basslink will be a net carbon emitter; it is in breach of World Heritage obligations for its impact on the Gordon River and in breach of the Convention of Migratory Species. For more information, see *Wild* no 89 or visit www.greens.org.au/bobbrown 

threatened by development



Photos by Doug Thorst

Please email or write to:

Rod King, Project Manager
Stage Designs, 66 Hampden Road
Battery Point, Tas. 7004
Ph: (03) 6224 0355
Email: rodk@stagedesign.com.au
Cc to: reception@marrinertheatres.com.au

General Manager Parks and Wildlife
GPO Box 1751, Hobart, Tas. 7001
Ph: (03) 6223 3169
Peter.Mooney@parks.tas.gov.au
Please cc Ken Bacon: Minister Parks
minister@dtpa.tas.gov.au



More information: Contact the Tasmanian National Parks Association. Become a member or give a donation.
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Website: www.tnpa.asn.au

1: The WHA MP alteration zoned the previously unzoned development site as part of the Cockle Creek East Visitor Services Site. One of the three sentences that were changed for the WHA MP alteration is as follows:

"In the Southwest National Park development of infrastructure including huts is not allowed to "detract from the natural character of the area," was replaced by: "In the Southwest National Park development of infrastructure, including huts is not allowed, except within the Cockle Creek East Visitor Services Site."

2: "I have said unequivocally and on many occasions that I do not support commercial tourism developments in our national parks." – Premier Jim Bacon, *The Mercury*, 1 Jan. 2003, after his government had approved the Cockle Creek East development!

3: The TNPA has successfully stopped helicopter tourism in the World Heritage Area, developments at Maria Island, and Pumphouse Point at Lake St Clair.

Memo for a Saner World

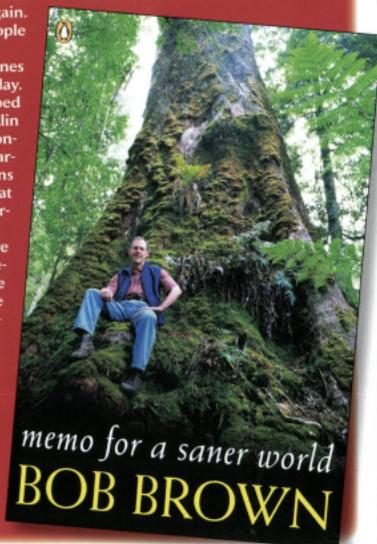
by Bob Brown (Penguin, 2004, RRP \$24.95).

Bashed at the Franklin River, shot at near Farmhouse Creek, fire-bombed by vigilantes in the East Picton, jailed for taking stands of principle, vilified by 'popular opinion'; he's had the courage of his convictions, and been proved right, again and again. When Bob Brown speaks, people listen.

Memo for a Saner World outlines his manifesto for the world today. He tells the stories which helped to shape his vision: the Franklin Dam, the forests, the Tampa, confronting George W Bush in parliament over the Australians held at Guantanamo Bay—great stories of commitment and courage.

He points out the issues we now face including the destruction of our forests, the greenhouse effect, and the welfare of indigenous Australians. But the book is also a celebration of humanity and the world. It is a book by an optimist.

It sings when Brown describes the wild places, birds and animals that inspire him. His love of the bush informs the arguments he takes into the great debates of our time.



In the Ghost Country

by Peter Hillary and John Elder (Random House, 2004, RRP \$32.95).

In the Antarctic summer of 1998–99, Peter Hillary, John Muir and Eric Philips hauled 200 kilogram sleds 1450 kilometres from Scott Base to the South Pole using skis and sails, in the process becoming the first to travel the Shackleton Glacier from bottom to top. Hillary and journalist John Elder have co-written an account of this trip, following after *IceTrek*, Philips's account of the same trip, reviewed in *Wild* no 81.

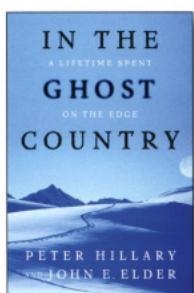
Both books recount the background and progress of the South Pole expedition; however, they also analyse the group dysfunction that plagued the trio on their 84-day trek. Polar travel, it seems, is prone to dysfunctional relationships: Hillary and

Elder refer to polar travel having 'a sordid history of hatred and resentment laying waste to expeditions'.

As detailed in *In the Ghost Country*, Hillary experienced visual deprivation, loneliness, and the 'emptiness of living with the others' on the trek to the South Pole. While Philips and Muir chose to confide in each other, Hillary visualised and sometimes engaged with the 'ghosts' of family, friends and fellow climbers.

The physical and emotional challenges faced by Hillary on the four-week journey across the featureless shelf are described in detail. Many stories about Peter and Edmund Hillary's high-altitude and polar expeditions, the Hillary family life, and early Antarctic exploration are included, as well as excerpts from literature, letters and government manuals for Arctic operations.

Naomi Peters



Walking in the Alps

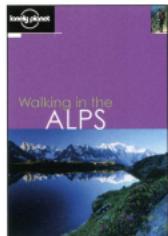
by Helen Fairbairn and others (Lonely Planet Publications, 2004, RRP \$39.90).

In this case 'the Alps' are the European Alps which span half a dozen countries, and Lonely Planet's latest walking guide does this spectacular range proud. The 47 walks described range in duration from a few hours to two weeks and include classic circuits and traverses.

Each new Lonely Planet guide seems better than the last, to the point where they have become something of an art form. Outstanding maps, motivating photos and clean graphics are now a given; concise, reliable and relevant information has always been so.

If you want to walk among some of the most spectacular peaks on the planet, this is the way to go.

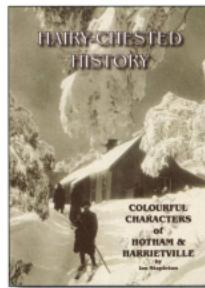
Chris Baxter



Hairy-Chested History

by Ian Stapleton (published by the author, 2003, RRP \$30 plus \$8 p&p from the author, Feathertop Tk, Harrietville, Vic 3741).

In *Hairy-Chested History* Stapleton brings to life many of the colourful characters from the Harrietville, Omeo and upper Dargo areas of the Victorian Alps. Compiled from conversations and interviews conducted since the 1970s, the book concentrates on people and pioneers such as hospice managers, gold-miners, cattlemen, road workers and



service providers. *Hairy-Chested History* contains a good smattering of historical half-tone photographs and the text is enlivened by anecdotes and quotes, making it interesting to read.

Glenn van der Knijff

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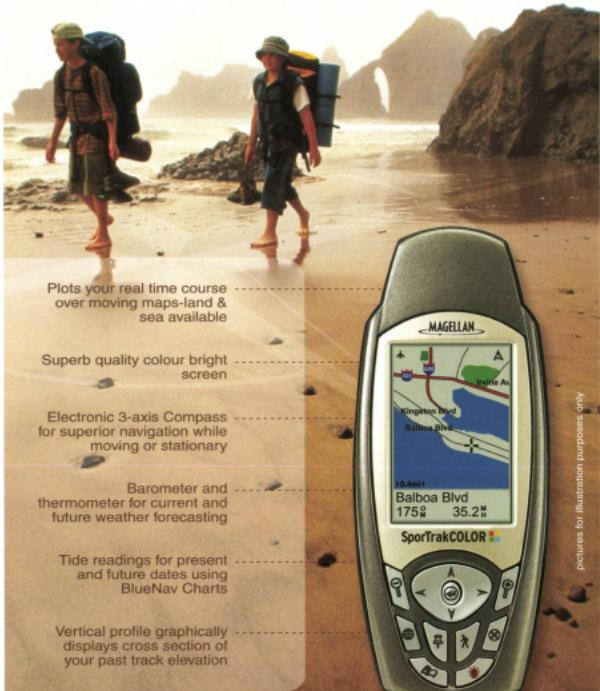
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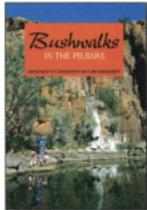
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Bushwalks in the Pilbara

by Mike Bodsworth, Christie Mahoney, Judymae Napier and David Whitelaw
(Department of Conservation & Land Management, 2004, RRP \$16.45).

Described as a land of contrasts, the vast Pilbara region encompasses red-coloured ranges adorned with stark white gums, deep gorges, spinifex plains, hidden deserts and a coastline dotted with islands and coral reefs. Fourth in a series by the Western Australia Department of Conservation & Land Management, the Pilbara guide covers 40 day-walks up to 12 kilometres long, varying from gentle strolls to serious canyons and mountain trips. Hand-drawn sketch maps add a bird's-eye perspective to the gorges and rugged terrain while informative feature sections describe Aboriginal dreaming stories, geological formations and historical snippets as well as some unique flora and fauna thriving amongst the hot rocks and sand.

David Wagland

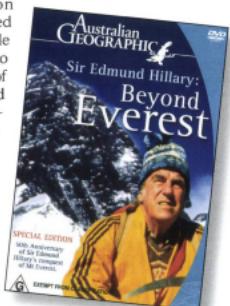


Sir Edmund Hillary: Beyond Everest DVD

by Michael Dillon Film Enterprises (Australian Geographic, 2000, RRP \$34.95).

If you know little about Edmund Hillary other than his achievements in climbing Mt Everest, this DVD will quickly give you an insight into his affection for the people of the Mt Everest region and of his philanthropic achievements over 40 years 'Beyond Everest'. Do not expect an extensive commentary about the further climbs and adventures of Hillary, but an inspiring documentary about his dedication to improving the community's social infrastructure and providing opportunities for Nepalese children to support their social economy in years to come. The historical footage offers a basic introduction to the isolated Sherpa people living close to the summit of the world and includes spectacular photography.

Zoe Foulser



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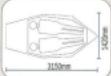
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